KASHMIR
THE GORDIAN KNOT

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by

B. K. VAISHNAVI

Edited by

V. K. VAISHNAVI & CHETANA VAISHNAVI

UNISTAR

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V. K. Vaishnavi & Chetana Vaishnavi

Flat No. 33, GH-3
Mansa Devi Complex , Sector 5, Panchkula
Phone : 0172-2709533, (M) 9417002343
E-mail : vvaishnavi@yahoo.com
cvaishnavi@rediffmail.com

2006
E0241-C015
Published by Unistar Books Pvt. Ltd.
S.C.O. 26-27, Sector 34 A, Chandigarh-160022,
Ph.0172-5077427, 5077428
visit us at:www.unistarbooks.com
email:info@unistarbooks.com
email:sales@unistarbooks.com
email:editorial@unistarbooks.com
Type Setting & Design PCIS
Printed & bound at Jai Offset Printers, Chandigarh
Ph:0172-2640382

To the people of Kashmir

FROM THE DESK OF
SHEIKH GHULAM QADIR PARDESI



It was year 1954, when I joined S.P.College, Srinagar, for further studies and started taking interest in the social, cultural and other activities as a college student. Those were the days when among all new faces, these particular persons, started to remain very close to me as college mates. One was Farooq Nazki and the other was Mr Brij Kishen Vaishnavi from Baghi –Sunder Chattabal. This is the introduction he gave at the first meet. A slim student with golden hair, wearing spectacles, he said, "Dear Qadir, I would like to be your friend as well as your younger brother. Have you any objection?" I gazed at him, he was a thin slim boy talking with such confidence, which was astonishing and admiring for me. I said, "Okay. But remember I dear my principles more than my life. He listened to my words and said, "No *yaar*; you are a student of some principles, okay, carry on." I laughed very loudly and stood up, hugged him and this was the beginning of frienship which ended only after his swift and painless departure for heavens on 14th June, 2003. Inspite of so many differences on so many occasions, the friends' circle started growing more vigourously and in every sitting Mr. Vaishnavi would bring the talk of college matters to a political discussion, at times which would generate so much heat that it would end in *maaramaari*. Keeping in mind the Government of most popular and tallest leader *Sher-e-Kashmir* had been dismissed and he had been arrested in August 1953. The wound was fresh and anti-Bakshi sentiments were still at peak, inspite of the fact that he proved to be the best Prime Minister and real builder of Jammu and Kashmir till

this date. One day the discussion was so hot that I really felt that few friends from *Nawakadal* side may manhandle the boy, BK. I asked Mr. B. K. to sit by my side very close to me and requested the circle to disperse. Perhaps my good physique and strong body was helping me to make my colleagues to accept my word. When they dispersed, I told Mr. Vaishnavi in the presence of Farooq Nazki (former Director of Doordarshan, Srinagar) and Pushkar Nath Balhami, as an affectionate elder brother. "You Mr. Vaishnavi, are you mad? Why don't you see forward and the present circumstances and your own strength?" He laughed and said, "When I have an elder brother like you, why should I be afraid of any one in this world?"

I laughed at him and took these words very lightly. But after a period of more than three years when we had joined active mainstream politics I could realize that this man was very serious at that moment. When I as a college student had dismissed his words as that of my college mate, the days passed on the circle of friendship which was of a particular type and political culture was growing and its mover was Mr. B.K. Vaishnavi

In this circle of friends, few persons were Mr. G.M. Baba, Mr Gh. Hassan Sofi, Mr Gh. Qadir Vechar, Mr. Mohd. Yaqub Vakil and Mr. P.N. Balhami. One day Mr. B.K told me when we were only two brothers sitting in college park that this Sofi Hassan, who is actually a student of Amar Singh College is politically motivated person and wants to establish a Youth Conference in the state with the blessings of Prime Minister, Gh. Mohd Bakshi, and is desirous of our joining him in this venture. I, as a simple student, told him, "Okay, it is your own wish. If you want to join him you are most welcome, what have I to do with it." He, in sarcastic manner, said, **"*Yaar*, why don't you understand, unfortunately I am a Pandit."**

I told him, "How does it matter, when I talk secularism against *Raishumaari* (plebiscite)?" He said, "It is you who matter being an emancipated Kashmiri Muslim youth, who joins the Youth Conference." I remember I reacted very badly, but it was Mr Vaishnavi who won and made me to follow his advice. This was the beginning and is still on. We met the late Bakshi *Saheb*, and Youth

Conference as junior wing of National Conference was formed. But it was to work with Indian Youth Congress and the first membership forms filled were those of youth congress carrying lofty principles of Mahatma Gandhi and Congress. We attended the First Youth Congress convention at Baroda. Ram Lal Parikh and Jaffer Sharif were the secretaries and Indiraji was the President. Mr Puran Singh Azad was also the secretary. Mr B.K Vaishnavi had in this convention established personal rapport with all of the secretaries and side by side he had mentioned me too in these meetings. But he never mentioned it to me till it was revealed to me by one K.V. Reddy who too was one of the Central Secretaries. Days passed on. I was appointed President of the Youth Conference in place of Sofi Hassan and Mr. B.K. Vaishnavi was the General Secretary. We were vigorously involved in mobilizing the youths when all of a sudden Kamaraj Plan was adopted and Bakshi *Saheb,* was made to resign. In the midst of this political turmoil while one faction of Youth Conference decided to support the decision, Mr. B.K. Vaishnavi decided to oppose the decisions of Congress Working Committee. I had a very long discussion at my home at Batwara where he was like a family member. It is in this cool and sincere discussion, I for the first time appreciated and loved him, after finding him a true Kashmiri secular leader who was not prepared to compromise with the internal political autonomy and *kashmiriyat* of Jammu and Kashmir. He was no doubt a patriot and felt proud of being part of India, but he would never at any stage in our discussion with central leaders and in political debates compromise with trampling of internal autonomy of our state, the continuation of state subject and our right to choose our government ourselves. His belief was to preserve kashmiri culture, its ethics and identity and he would say, "I believe in unity but with our diversity to be preferred."

While deciding to oppose Kamaraj plan when I totally agreed with him he was quite sure that our protests would be ignored and asked me, " Will you even then lead these protests?" I said, "Not only in Srinagar, but in Delhi also!" We came on roads, made strikes and ultimately went to Delhi and met Pt. Jawarharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister and Mrs Indira Gandhi, the president of Youth Congress. A very hot discussion—but we were only heard

and directed to reach Jammu and take part in the function where Mr. Shams-ud-din was to resign and Mr Sadiq to take over. We came from Delhi and went to Srinagar without joining the function. This was our first humble political protest.

We joined services for sometime again. Our political meetings would continue. Mr. Vaishnavi was always restless and not satisfied with political happenings in Kashmir. Again in 1996, he was all active in political process and made me to fight election in 1996 on the congress ticket. When I referred him to Kamaraj Plan he said he still believes what I believed then, but we must have the platform we fought and advocated importance of dialogue. People appreciated but organizational pressures compelled us to leave congress and under the leadership of Mr. Mufti Mohd. Syed, formed a new political party as Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Mr B.K Vaishnavi played a very important role in making PDP a successful political force to be recognized and heard. He was a very important member of political affairs committee. What Mr. Vaishnavi would tell me at times was that in the heart of hearts he would love the political programme of National Conference known as *Naya Kashmir* but on the other hand had greatest hatred for the family rule perpetuated by Sheikh family. At times he would tell me with a sigh of anguish, "Dear Pardesi, could it be a day when our PDP would inherit political agenda of N.C and could go to Hazratbal and say that we are the real heirs of political leader Sheikh Abdullah?" He tried to remain very active during turmoil with younger leadership of separatist. He would meet late Mr. A. G. Lone, Mr. Shabir Shah, and Mr. Mohd. Yasin Malik as revealed to me by him. He was trying his hard and persuaded me to re-enter PDP which I had left on an emotional matter. But this happened when he was not alive. A week or so before his departure for Heavens, he came to my home, *Shivpura*. We were together for at least two hours and while listening to his advice and other sermons, I could feel he was very much hurt for the treatment which was given by his party after coming to power.

I feel that today that this great and veteran political leader has become the victim of deceit, conspiracy and ingratitude. None of the promises made to him were fulfilled. He, being an emotional and

sensitive person, was unable to bear the anguish of this deceit and he left world. Kashmir has lost a leader who had *Kashmiriyat* and *Naya Kashmir* as his dreams. Personally, I have lost a loving, sympathetic and a true friend—a brother, the void of which can never be filled up again.

Sheikh Ghulam Qadir Pardesi,
Joint Financial Commissioner (Retd.)
Member- Khadi Village Industries Board,
SRINAGAR.
(J & K State)

GLIMPSES OF HISTORY

B. K. Vaishnavi was born on April 10, 1940 in Srinagar in a family of literates. Right from his childhood he had the influence of *rishis* and *sufis*, which Kashmir could boast of. His philosophical approach to life made him an object of awe and wonder. He did his M.A. in History from Jammu & Kashmir University and wrote a dissertation on the inpact of *Shaivism* over *Sufism*.

He had a deep interest in the political issues and was keen that Kashmiri Pandits should get their rightful place in Kashmir's polity, and that casteism should not hammer the peaceful atmosphere of the Valley. But unfrotunately Pakistan, under the guise of friendship, started a proxy war in J & K from Oct. 1988.

The cause of this proxy war can be better understood if we know the history of Kashmir. It all started with the partition of India into two nations....

Partition has been the greatest mistake that has occurred to joint India. Debates have been held again and again as to whom to blame for the partition. Mohd. Ali Jinnah is often quoted as being responsible for it. However a very few know that Jinnah was not a mass leader, nor was he endorsed by the Muslim clergy at that time. He only received support from the Muslim minority provinces. The British Governors of Sindh, Punjab and the North-West frontier provinces worked hard to reinforce the position of Jinnah. Lord Wavell had drawn up the partition plan in 1946 before the cabinet mission arrived in India. The real author of partition were the Britishers who feared that India would walk out of the Commonwealth and adopt a neutralist position between West and the Soviet Union.

Digging into history, Jammu and Kashmir had become a single political and geographical entity, signed by Gulab Singh on March, 16, 1846 with the British treaty. This treaty gave a control of Kashmir state to the Dogra ruler of Jammu and a new state comprising of three districts viz. Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh was formed with Maharaja Gulab Singh as its ruler. The feudal dispensation in the state and particularly in Kashmir was so harsh that it gave rise to a struggling movement at the end of 100 years of Dogra rule. Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah rose against the autocratic rule for the freedom of this state and people irrespective of their religion and caste were with him. They affectionately gave him the name of *Sher-e- Kashmir*. The movement gained the strength in 1931 when 22 protestors were massacred and the National Conference headed by Sheikh Abdullah became a Mass Movement and popular and secular voice of the people of the state.

Most of the elderly kashmiris know that it was the grandfather of Mirwaiz Farooq who formed the Muslim Conference in 1931 and he was institutional in getting Sheikh Abdullah to politics who after wards formed his own party, known as National conference to give J & K a new face as "*Naya Kashmir*" which is still to be achieved. The ideas given by the late Sheikh Abdullah was not implemented in his regime.

J & K, one of the 565 princely states of India was given the option by British rulers to join either India or Pakistan freshly created by them. The Government of India Act as adopted in Indian Independence Act 1947 provided, "An Indian state shall be deemed to have acceded to the Dominion if the Governor-General has signified the acceptance of an Instrument of Accession executed by the rule thereof." Even India, Pakistan and Britain were party to this provision, so the choice was left with the princely states and rulers of the other states to which dominion they were to go. In the Indian Independence Act 1947, there was no provision for any conditional accession.

The ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, did not give his opinion but offered a proposal of Standstill Agreement to Pakistan and India. As per the New leadership of J & K who wanted

Pak as a part of talk, pending final decision on the state's accession, through the then Prime Minister of J & K on 12th Aug. 1947, they sent the same indication to the Government of India and Pakistan that the Government of J & K would welcome Standstill Agreement with Union of India and Pak on all matters on which there exists arrangements with the outgoing British India Government Pak accepted the offer and sent a message in reply that they agree to the Standstill Agreement whereas India did not offer to agree and advised the Maharaja to send his authorised representatives to Delhi for discussion on the offer of standstill.

Pak had an eye on J & K even before the lapse of British Government, Mohd. Ali Jinnah had a plan to grab the heaven on Earth and said once, "Kashmir is a blank cheque in my pocket." On August 24, 1947, appearing in Daily Dawn, "The time has come to tell the Maharaja of Kashmir that he must make his choice and choose Pakistan. Should Kashmir fail to join Pak the gravest possible trouble will inevitably ensue." In his bid to woo Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah Mr. Jinnah visited Srinagar a couple of times but could not achieve anything.

The Maharaja had to face challenges from the people of Kashmir who had launched "Quit Kashmir Movenent" under the leadership of Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah. This new alarming situation arose out of repeated violation of Standstill Agreement of Pak and blocking of Rawalpindi-Srinagar road. On Oct 1, 1947, Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah was addressing a mammoth public meeting at Hazuri Bagh when he said, " Till the last drop of my blood I will not believe in the two Nation theory." This was a rebuff to Mr. Jinnah.

Pakistan launched an armed attack on J & K to annexe it by sending their regular troops. They along with Pathan tribals in thousands entered the state on 22 Oct 1947 from several points and indulged in bloodshed. The people of J & K were not expecting an attack from Pakistan. Maharaja Hari Singh under the pressure from the people of the state and National Conference dominated by muslims to push back the Pakistani invaders signed the Kashmir accession to India, which was accepted by Government of India. the instrument of accession in favour of India on the prescribed terms

and conditions were accepted by Governor–General of India, Lord Mountbatten on 26th Oct. 1947. Thus Jammu & Kashmir became a legal and constitutional part of the Union of India.

People of Kashmir under the leadership of Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah mobilized and resisted a marching column of the enemy till the arrival of the Indian troops. It were mainly the Muslim volunteers, under the command of Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah, who braved death to push back the invaders. The most glaring of the people's resistance was the martyrdom of Mohd. Maqbool Sherwani and Master Abdul Aziz. On 30th Oct, 1947 an emergency Government was formed with Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah as the Prime Minister. In 1951 the State constitution and assembly was elected. On Oct 31,1951 Delhi Agreement was signed between the two Prime Ministers—one of India and one of J & K, giving special position to the state of J &K under Indian Constitutional framework. Karan Singh was chosen as *Sadar-I-Riyasat* on Nov. 15th 1952, thus bringing the end of 106 years of hereditary rule in J & K.

In the month of Aug., 1953, Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah was arrested which resulted in a discord among the people of J & K and there was restlessness in the state. Bakshi Ghulam Mohd. became the Prime Minister of J & K. On Feb 6, 1954 the constituent assembly ratified the Accession of the state to the Union of India. The state owned Constitution came into force on Jan. 26, 1957 under which the election to the assembly was held for the first time. Bakshi Ghulam Mohd was the best Prime Minister till he ruled and no one could take his place. He gave a new shape to J & K.

Sheikh Abdullah became the Chief Minister again in seventies when Mir Qasim, the then Chief Minister, gave a way to him after an accord between Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah.

Pakistan with the ambition to grab Kashmir, waged two wars again in 1965 and 1971 respectively to annexe Kashmir but the people of Kashmir gave them a befitting reply. Pakistan even after the Shimla agreement of July, 1972 could not check their impulse, and started proxy war from 1988 once again. The recent Kargil war in 1999 is a testimony to their unabating desire to annexe Kashmir.

The root cause of Kashmir problem is not just a law and order problem The problem lies between policy of appeasement and soft and permissive attitude of Central Government towards Kashmir. The policies of deception and spurious democracy played by the leaders in the use of religion to misguide the youth and take to the path of violence added fuel to the fire. Regional differences of the state, that is the disparity of the three regions viz. Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, each having its own subculture has not been taken into account. The Islamic history has been selectively used and doctored to flare religious frenzy. The Kashmiri Hindus were hit a lot. This forced them to migrate from Kashmir enmass. The habit of nursing illusions, legacies of the past, infirmity of administration, public corruption, regional differences, disintegration and surrender on basic principles have resulted in an invitation to terrorism and militancy in Kashmir. Mufti Baha-ud-din Farooqi, former Chief Justice of J & K High Court, speaking through the writ petition filed by him mentions, "Nearly 42 years back India annexed the J & K state by manipulation, fraud and force against the declared wishes of the state."

In the same writ petition, Mufti Baha-ud-din goes on to affirm—"The people of the state scented mischief and continued the freedom struggle with added determination.... That soon after the Indian Army landed in Kashmir, it mounted a powerful offensive on freedom fighters and impose a reign of terror in the state. The Indian Government worked on the plan to weaken and dismember Pakistan and to maintain hegemony on Kashmir through sheer might."

Inspite of holding an important position in the state and drawing huge salaries with pensionary and other benefits from Indian exchequer, one could still speak against their benefactor. This treachery should be deplored.

Most of the Kashmiri politicians are adept in speaking in two voices. They could be secular as well as communal, democratic as well as dictatorial. If the central leaders allowed the Kashmiri leaders to rule the state in whatever manner they liked, whether or not it was in the interest of the country or not, then accession to India is a temporary thing. Whereas when benefits have to be

derived from India, accession was taken to be final and concrete.

Sheikh Abdullah politicized religion. He paved way for fundamentalism and built an emotional bedrock against India. His secularism was phoney. Basically Sheikh Abdullah was neither for India nor Pakistan. It was his power game that brought precedence over everything else. What suited him in a particular moment was all that mattered. Sheikh was portrayed as a champion of Kashmiri freedom. The elections ceased to have any real meaning for democracy or the national cause. But turned out to be more exercises for keeping unpatriotic elements alive.

If the Kashmiri youth has started hating India, is it the fault of youth or of those who indulged in permitting propanda of this nature?

The unwritten accord of Nov. 1986 between National Conference and Congress (I) to form a coalition Goverment known as the Rajiv-Farooq Accord was another reflex of spurious democracy. This accord could have yielded positive results had it been inspired by the reformative zeal and constructive approach. But National conference had joined hands merely to achieve their selfish goals. The accord only resulted in enlarging the circle of predatory and insensitive oligarchy and to create a new illusions. A pompous declaration was made by Dr. Farooq Abdulllah about the closure of schools run by *Jamaat-i-Islami*. A misleading impression was created about a special assistance of Rs.100 crores to Kashmir by the Centre. Actually it was a manipulation of figures. Such deception and the false promises proved counter productive. They merely added to the atmosphere of irritation and frustration.

Dr. Farooq Abdullah and the National Conference as a party used Islam to attain their political end. There has been elements who exhibited a marked Islamic orientation. Sometimes these elements acted as fanatically as any fundamentalist group would act. For eg. Attaullah Suhrawardy, a former minister and Deputy speaker made the following remarks in the State Legislative Council;

"I am first a muslim and then an Indian. Islam does not need the support of anyone for its spread. It is spreading on its own. At the time of partition there were only 4.5 crore Muslims in the

country. However, inspite of the bloody communal riots in Bhiwandi; Moradabad, Aligarh and other areas, killing thousands of muslims, the population of muslims have increased to 14 crores....As for the question of conversion of all to Islam, it is the fundamental duty of a Muslim to strive for conversion and any Muslim who does not remember this duty does not deserve to be called a Muslim."

A political force calculated that by enlarging the National Conference strategy of using Islam in times of need and by fundamentalising Islam they can put a stronger foothold on the political landscape of the state. This force was *Jamaat-i-Islami*, which tilted Kashmiri social and political ethos towards fundamentalism and fanaticism. It spread pro-Pakistan sentiments even among groups which were other wise not in favour of merger of Kashmir with Pakistan.

Jamaat-i-Islami rejects secularism and socialism, and it calls 'Indian colonialism" and "Brahmanical imperialism'. It labels the Union Government as "Delhi Durbar" and considers Kashmir's accession to India as disputed. It works for Kashmir's merger with Pakistan. A booklet titled, *Mukadama-e-Ilhaq* (Trial of accession) the *Jamaat-i-Islami* speaks to the people in views that express highly emotional and religious tone to be propagated with the impurity for number of years. No counter-strategy was formulated and implemented. Nothing effective nor concrete was done to educate people about the pitfalls of fanaticism and fundamentalism and the total injury which the hegemony of Pakistan would cause to Kashmir's identity and culture. Consequently *Jamaat-i-Islami* continued to gain strength on the political front advocating increasingly belligerency that accession of Kashmir to India was not final that *jehad* was a legitimate weapon for the Muslims, that the program of General Zia of Islamising Pakistani Society was inspiring and admirable.

For the consumption of the public the Chief Minister did everything to encourage communal pro-autonomy and secessionist forces. These forces were pernicious than others because they preached Islamic fundamentalism mixed with pro-Pak sentiments.

But, Indian Govt remained insensitive to all such matters..

G. M. Shah, the former Chief Minister, disclosed in public statement in March 1988 that he paid Rs. One lakh to Awami Action Committee Chief for securing his help for getting Muzaffar Shah elected from Srinagar City, Parliamentary Constituency in Dec. 1984 Lok Sabha elections. While it was generally believed that he spoke the truth, nobody either from state or Central agency asked him to account for the same.

In the same year, on 16th July 1988, G. M. Shah alleged in a public statement, "Dr. Farooq Abdullah has a fleet of motor vehicles of latest Models worth 32 lakhs and a motor bike which was worth 72,000. I demand that the C. M. should indicate the source of income from which he purchased the vehicles."

These are examples which show that corruption in Kashmir was so endemic that practically nothing was done to eliminate it.

Strongest root of Kashmiri separatism and alienation lies in Article 370 of the constitution of India which has given a special status to J & K. This Article has become an instrument of exploitation in the hands of the ruling political elites and other vested interests in bureaucracy. Apart from politicians, the richer classes have found it convenient to amass wealth and not allow a healthy legislation to come to the state. There are so many taxes which has not been allowed to operate in the state under this Article. The Article 370 the by-product of which is that the J & K has its own constitution as none of the Indian state has their own separate constitution. This constitution has created a number of problems, particularly in the right to hold property, right to citizenship, right to settlement. The citizens of India do not automatically become the citizen of J & K and have no constitutional right to settle in the state, whereas the opposite is true for the J & K citizens.

The spark of terrorism started on October 27th, 1988, when a maruti van was blown at Lal Chowk. Early in the morning of July 13th 1989 a CRPF bus was fired upon. Two jawans died in the incident and on 17th July, 1989, JKLF made a formal announcement claiming responsibility for the attack. It declared, "Such attacks

would go until the Indian tyranny and imperialism are ended." And till date terrorism continues.

The killing of Kashmiri pandits started on Sept.14th 1989 when Tikka Lal Taploo, Vice-President of J & K unit of BJP was gunned down by two young men. A press statement was given by the JKLF, "We will kill all those who say the J&K accession to India is irrevocable." By April 1990, 1.2 lakh Kashmiri Pandits fled to Jammu and to other parts of the country. It was a hard decision for kashmiri Pandits. Kashmir was on fire. The Heaven on earth was reduced to Hell. The Kashmir, where people breathed freely and roamed fearlessly even in the dead of night has become so sensitive that people reach their homes before the fall of dusk and leave their homes much later in the day.

It was the effort of B.K. Vaishnavi who tried to intiate with the Indian Government that the terrorism could only be dealt with dialogue and not with guns. Many a times he went to Srinagar to meet the concerned people to pursue the process of peace with *a healing touch*. Bee Kay, along with Mufti Mohd. Sayeed and other political leaders formed the *Peoples Democratic Party,* which won the assembly elections. He being the founder- member of the party was in the forefront for evolving the peace right from 1994. Bee Kay's dream was to have the political programme of National Conference known as *Naya Kashmir* along with their political agenda that PDP would inherit and could go to Hazratbal to claim that the PDP were the real heirs of the political leader, Sheikh Abdullah. Bee Kay despised the family rule because they do not make leaders, but are forced to don the mask of leaders as this is the first force of terrorism not of democracy. Many a time he would say, "This family rule may start in many states of India and may prove a base for terrorism. It has to be stopped along with the corruption which is weeding the society, lest India goes into the hands of others."

Terrorists are not to be treated like enemies but should we know their need and give them a healing touch as they have been playing in the hands of others so that to some extent terrorism can be stopped and show them the right path to go ahead in life.

Bee Kay kept on voicing his concerns for J & K through his magazine, "*The Salook*" which was started in 1996 and later on renamed as "Decide", of which he was the honorary Chief Editor. This book contains his writings and comments written in the above magazines, some of which we have lost. This book is a tribute to all his efforts towards the cause of Kashmir.

V. K. VAISHNAVI

1

With the announcement of the Election Commission fixing dates for the next general elections to the Lok Sabha and a few State Assemblies, the uncertainty about this matter is substantially over. But what baffles the political observers is that in Jammu and Kashmir only Lok Sabha elections have been declared leaving the Assembly election to be held at a later date. This halfhearted measure is neither well advised nor conducive for creating an atmosphere for revival of political process in the state. It would on the other hand, generate a negative reaction, which might nullify all the good work done recently in Kashmir.

By holding only Lok Sabha elections in J & K State, the Centre would be accused of not being serious about the political process in Kashmir and that the deferment of the Assembly elections has been because no understanding had yet been struck with Farooq Abdullah. It is ironical that with Farooq Abdullah being totally irrelevant, the Centre does not deal with the new generation of Kashmiris who have come to occupy the centre-stage. Moreover, the sections of Kashmir society who had started entertaining hopes of breaking of the political stalemate would be severely disappointed as the opportunity to elect their own Assembly would have been inordinately delayed. This would leave this section, which was steadily growing in numbers, again exposed to the propaganda and machinations of Pakistan and its cohorts in Kashmir. Already the pro-Pak secessionist groups, including the Hurriyat Conference, have started opposing the elections and talked

of boycotting the same. They have said that they don't recognise the constitution of India and were, therefore, not obliged to vote for the Indian Parliament.

Kashmir, as is too well known, has passed through a traumatic period and one had expected the powers that be at the Centre to deal with the Kashmir situation with greater understanding and care. In the background of the prevalent situation it would be a Herculean job to hold elections twice in the state once for the Lok Sabha and then for the State Assembly. Not only will it entail tremendous strain on resources but also it will provide a time gap for the mischief mongers to regroup themselves and conspire to sabotage the elections.

We have seen in the past that whenever the situation in Kashmir has taken a turn for the better and efforts for starting a political process were being initiated, the pro-Pak elements managed to vitiate the atmosphere. The burning of the *Charar-e-Sharif* Shrine, the siege at Hazratbal, the bitter clash at Bijbehara and now again the recent bloody encounter at Hazratbal Shrine are witnesses to this. It is not understood and appreciated how this simple fact has been overlooked.

Normally, elections are a means to provide an opportunity to the people to elect their own representatives; but in the context of Kashmir, it is something much more than that. For the hapless State it provides an opportunity to retreat from the precipice and possible ushering in of an era of peace and hope. It could, with deft handling and appropriate political finesse, help in soothing the frayed feelings and offer the Kashmiris a chance to shape their own future. Unfortunately, the deferring of the Assembly elections would only help in adding to the already miserable state of the Kashmiris.

We only hope, and pray, that this does not prove to be the case of a missed opportunity. The stakes in Kashmir are very high and, therefore, it calls for a very high degree of planning and decision taking. Half-hearted measures, as the present one, can only lead to more complications. The Central Government and the Election Commission will do well to appreciate that the situation cannot be better than the one prevailing at the moment. They should, if it is

possible, revise the decision about the State and hold elections there simultaneously for the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assembly.

April, 1996

2

a'Kis maa'lis maaji hu'nydyan
timan du'y traa'vith ta kyaay
musalmanan kyavv hya' nydyan
Kar bandan toshi khwadaay
(No wonder, born of same father and mother,
We bear no ill-will to each other
Should our love bind us all alike, Hindu and Musalman,
Then surely God is pleased with us)

-Sheikh Noor-u-Din Wali
(Translated by late Prof. J.L. Kaul)

When big people with small minds come to preside over the destinies of people the result is most unsavoury. Human values become casuality; lust and greed predominate. Kashmir, which was traditionally known as the '*Rishi Waer*' (Abode of Rishis) is today enmeshed in a senseless orgy of murder and plunder. The people of Kashmir seem to be today drifting into a dark alley, full of fear and uncertainty. The tragedy of the whole situation is that when we have such priceless treasures of the wonderful fusion between the Trikka philosophy and Islam in Kashmir, a section of the people allow themselves to be misled in the name of religion.

The Rishi cult, of which Sheikh Noor-u-Din Noorani-Shamas-ul-Arifin was the shining star, was once so pervading that even princes and kings abandoned their thrones and joined the Rishi

order. Kalhana's Rajtarangini is full of such incidents where kings and ministers surrendered themselves to Rishis and subsequently lived as religious ascetics.

The most heinous sacrilege of the shrine of Nund Rishi at *Charar-e-Sharif* on May 11, last year worked as a shock therapy for the adrift Kashmiris who had lost their moorings. This was, besides the incidents in Hazratbat Shrine, the worst ever blow dealt by Pakistan and its cohorts to the Kashmiris and their creed of *Kashmiriyat*. This was a definite attempt at uprooting the Kashmiri psyche and substitute it with a totally alien concept and thought. Says Dr. S. Radha Krishnan, 'A truly religious man has a sense of humility. He has faith but not fanaticism while faith is the refuge of the humble, fanaticism is outcome of a secret and excessive pride.'

We believe religion has nothing to do with the present turmoil in Kashmir except to be exploited to achieve narrow political gains. Islam is called ' Deen-ul-Haqq' (the religion of truth) yet nowhere does it claim to have the sole monopoly of truth. The Holy Quran is very clear about it and it says: 'We believe in God and the revelations given to us and to Abraham and Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to other apostles from their lord. We make no difference between them.'

There exists a certain definite section of people in Kashmir subscribing to the Jamait-e-Islam ideology who are opposed to Shrines and Khankas and who claim superior knowledge and want to muffle all dissent.

This is not the first time that Kashmir has passed through such fanatic phases. This has happened many times before but every time the Kashmiris eventually defeated such forces. It will happen this time too. To save himself the Kashmiri has to save *Kashmiriyat*.

We have dedicated this entire issue to the memory and teachings of Nund Rishi.

May, 1996

3

The peaceful conclusion of the 11th General Elections is yet another proof of the firm roots that democracy has taken in this country. The last elections were particularly significant in as much as the contesting candidates stuck, by and large, to the code of conduct. As a result, the usual noise, display of hoardings and buntings, gross misuse of vehicles, disfigurement of walls etc. were totally absent. For this the main credit goes to the Central Election Commission but one cannot overlook the fact that all political parties cooperated in the observance of the code of conduct, though it had no legal/constitutional sanction behind it. The nation has matured into a great democracy and it all augurs well for the future. The upshot of the eleventh Lok Sabha elections has been the disappearance of political parties, which could claim the entire country as a constituency. Regional parties representing local aspersions have come to the fore. In the times to come one can hope to see federalism more and more into operation. This could, well be the start of a transition from monolithism to multi-polar and pluralistic polity in the country. They do, in a way, reassert what the Late Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru said: Unity in diversity. Our ethos is basically very sound and secularism has come to be our mainstay. The present churning is bound to throw up a polity in which more strength will be lent to our existence as the world's largest democracy. India is, no doubt, poised for a great leap forward and it will not be far when we will be counted among the great powers.

While the nation, was engrossed in the process of Lok Sabha

general elections, another revolution of much greater significance, was taking place in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. After a period of seven long years and going through the hell of terrorism the people of Jammu and Kashmir joined their compatriots in the rest of the country to choose their representatives. The elections to the six Lok Sabha seats from the state have been successfully conducted and concluded. There is no gainsaying the fact that the previous Government of Narsimha Rao deserves all the praise for the manner in which they organised these elections. Praise is also due to Governor Krishna Rao for the determination shown by his administration in successfully conducting the elections. This is the first decisive step at striking at the vice-like-grip of the secessionist elements and their cohorts. The people of the state are tired of terrorism and they want peace and progress. There is no doubt that the way has been cleared for holding Assembly elections and allowing the people of Jammu and Kashmir to have a democratically elected government which will properly represent their aspersions. The atmosphere for a dialogue is much more propitious now than ever before.

The inevitable fall of the Vajpayee government after a stint of just thirteen days has, once again, upheld the secular traditions of the nation. The emergence of the United Front of all secular parties is a step in the right direction. We hope that H.D. Deve Gowda, the new Prime Minister, will provide a stable and good government. No doubt the task before him is difficult but given the goodwill and proper cooperation he is bound to provide a people-friendly government. He is a 'son of the soil', deeply conscious of the problems of the average. Indian. We are sanguine that he will take India into a new era of peace and prosperity. The United Front has to remain united or else face the wrath of the people. What remains to be seen is how the new government deals with Muslims. We earnestly hope they too do not treat Muslims only as a vote bank. They have to assure this community of being a full partner in the march of the nation, and not merely treat them as a garnishing on the political plate.

June, 1996

4

With the break-up of the Soviet Union the world situation has undergone a fundamental change, Huttington believes that the clash of ideologies has given way to clash of civilizations. His thesis is that there is a definite move towards reassertion of cultural kinship based mainly on religious affinity. According to him the future conflicts will be between the Christian (read US-Europe axis) civilization and the Islamic and Confucian (read Chinese) civilizations. He is at pains to fit the recent Kuwaiti-Iraqi war into this pattern. The future wars, Huttington Avers, would be to defend and expand civilizations. Conflicts between nations would also be a part of this game. Though he does admit of the existence of strong ethnic and sub-cultural groups but foresees that ultimately these too would be drawn into the clash of civilizations. He, however, is unable to predict how the contradiction between the Christian West and orthodox Slavic Christianity in Russia would be resolved. Would Russia continue to look West yet be firmly entrenched in the East? All this can admit of many answers and our endeavours is to seek the right one.

1997 is here with us. We are sanguine that the hopes and expectations generated in Kashmir would largely be achieved. We believe the things are moving in the right direction notwithstanding the jarring note struck recently by the British Labour Party, The British would do well if they stopped interfering in our internal matters. The people of India and that includes people of Kashmir are mature enough to resolve the Kashmir tangle on their own.

India is celebrating the 50th year of its independence. Though the elite are disappointed with corruption, scams and scandals, loss of morals, ever decreasing efficiency, yet the fact cannot be lost sight of that India has come to be a working democracy. Inspite of its apparent inadequacies the democratic system in our country enjoys greater legitimacy than in the past. While we should take stock of the past fifty years there should be, at the same time, the unleashing of a debate on the future course of events. It is in the nature of things that when there is no external debate and opposition, some polarization occurs within the party in power. This does not always focus sharply on choices and options. However, often this polarization is about individuals and personalities. One does not have to look far to see that, that is the case in India. The challenge facing India at this critical juncture is to go beyond the contentious and emotive issues of the day to define a long-term direction.

The history of India's freedom struggle is a saga of sacrifices given by hundreds and thousands of its people. These people gave their lives so that the future generations enjoyed freedom, peace and prosperity. January 30 marks the day when the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi was felled by a bullet from a fanatic. Thus was the voice of reason muffled for sometime. But India is ever grateful to the Mahatma for having woken it from its long and deep slumber. It would be an exaggeration to say that Gandhi alone brought about the miracle. No individual, however, great and wonderful can be the sole mover of a historical process. A long line of distinguished predecessors, some known, some little known, had blazed the path for Gandhi to follow. We cannot forget the invaluable contributions made by people like Tilak, Ghokle, Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Lala Lajpat Rai, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Shri Aurobindo and many others. While celebrating the fiftieth year of our Independence, the grateful nation should also solemnly remember these martyrs but for whom we would have been still in chains.

A special word about Sabarmati Ashram which once throbbed as the focal point of the nation's freedom struggle. A recent visit to the Ashram saddened our hearts. The whole place was ill kept, in sharp contrast, when Gandhi lived here. We could find cobwebs

hanging in many rooms. One can hardly believe that it was from here that the Mahatma launched his *Dandi* March.

January, 1997

5

With the elevation of Mr. I K Gujral to the post of the Prime Minister, the nation heaved a sigh of relief after a turbulent period of three weeks. The withdrawal of support by the Congress to the Gowda government had plunged the nation into a period of political uncertainty building up into a first rate constitutional crisis. The fact that the budget for 1997-98 was not passed and no vote-on-account had been taken hard presaged, an economic crisis, which could have had serious consequences for the nation. It is a matter of great relief that the concerned people displayed maturity and sagacity leading to the selection of Mr. I K Gujral as the next Prime Minister. The Congress also helped in good measure by withdrawing its claim to form the Government. The nation is slowly learning to emerge into the phase of coalitions.

Inder Kumar Gujral has come a long way from Jhelum (now in Pakistan) to occupy the high office of the Prime Minister of India. Affable and urbane, Gujral is essentially a very private person who exudes charm and friendship. Known once as a member of Indira Gandhi's "Kitchen Cabinet" in the late sixties, Gujral graduated into an astute left of center politician. Excepting in 1989 when he was elected to Lok Sabha Gujral has been a member of the Rajya Sabha. He is known for his love of Urdu, especially poetry. He exudes streaks of sophistication generally associated with the alumni from Oxford and Harvard. He brings with him a vast experience as minister of such varied departments as Communication and Parliamentary Affairs, Information and Broadcasting, Works and Housing and Planning besides the Foreign Affairs. He also held the important diplomatic post of Indian Ambassador in Moscow. His

accomplishments as the Foreign Minister in Deve Gowda Ministry have earned him accolades even from his detractors. His enunciation of the 'Gujral Doctrine" leading to breaking of ice with immediate neighbors has been hailed even by Western powers. He has all the making of a good politician, statesman and above all a gentleman par-excellence.

Pro-Pak elements in Kashmir and their supporters have been consistently raising the bogey of alleged violations of human rights by the Security Forces in Kashmir. The Government of India has been consistently denying these allegations and has shown great transparency in dealing with and enquiring into such cases that are brought to its notice. Representatives of the National Human Rights Commission as also the Amnesty International were provided free access to the valley by the Central Government. None of these organisations have accepted the allegations. Another, yet very significant matter has been the human rights violation committed by the fundamentalist "terrorists" against the people of Kashmir, particularly the women and children. A team of "Salook" was specially assigned to enquire into this matter. They have come up with a special report, which is a part of the current issue. The Special Report would more than confirm the total disregard the terrorists have for human life and values.

It is an accepted fact that Indian Judicial system needs reforms to make justice meaningful and easily accessible to the people. The number of cases pending in various courts from the level of Munsif Court to the Supreme Court is legend. Unless urgent action is taken justice will become a mockery. Said J.S.Aver back, "Litigation has become an inevitable stage in the life cycle—slightly beyond adolescence but before maturity. It is virtually impossible to survive litigation and remain solvent, but it is occasionally possible to endure it and remain sane. As a modern ordeal by torture, litigation excels. It is exorbitantly expensive, agonizingly slow, and exquisitely designed to avoid any resemblance to fairness or justice. Yet, in strange and devious ways, it does settle disputes to everyone's dissatisfaction."

May, 1997

6

On June 15 three teachers of a Higher Secondary School in Gool (District Udampur) were merrily traveling in a passenger bus from Jammu to resume their duties after availing summer vacations. Close to their destination the threesome were jolted by a sudden halt of the bus. Before they could realise what was happening they heard a few gun-wielding persons commanding the passengers to come out and line up on the road. It was about 8 p.m. and evening had just descended. After identification with the help of the locals the three teachers were separated and brutally gunned down. The fault of these teachers was not that they were spreading knowledge but that they professed a faith other than the gunmen. The killed were identified as A K Raina, Principal, S K Bhat and Ravinder Kabu, both lecturers of Govt. Higher Secondary School. This gross tragedy has come so soon after the selective killing of seven Kashmiri Pandits in Sangrampura (April). Strangely, no upholders of Human Rights in this country have thought it fit to condemn such killings. This is in sharp contrast to their beating of the breasts in regard to alleged violations committed by the Security Forces. Teams after teams, traveling in luxury, have descended on the Kashmir valley to 'enquire and report' about violations by Security Forces. Ironically, no other leader or a political organisation with a few exceptions, has also found it right to condemn the killings and sympathise with the families of the deceased. Such crass neglect can lead to unwholesome consequences.

Experience, continuity and stability have been the winner in the recent congress organisational elections. Though Mr. Sita Ram Kesri's victory was a foregone conclusion, yet the massiveness of his victory has baffled every body. Mr. Kesri's election has halted the recent drift in the Congress Party and infused a new vigor and life into it. He has very adroitly brought the Congress back from the brink and placed it squarely on the centre-stage, once again. Excepting for Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Himachal and Nagaland, the Congress is not in power in any state. However, it is one of the main and the crucial supporters of the United Front Government at the centre. While hailing Mr. Kesri on his memorable victory, it is hoped that he will rejuvenate the party and make it play a more effective role in the national polity. The fact cannot be lost sight of that Congress is the largest political organisation with the largest base at the grass-root level. It has truly an all-India presence and if led properly and sagaciously it can regain some of its lost glory. The country needs a party like the Congress nurtured by such stalwarts as Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Indira Gandhi. Mr. Kesri has all the goodwill and the requisite mandate with him. He has to prove equal to the trust reposed in him.

The recent conclusion of the Secretary level talks in Islamabad, between India and Pakistan, has generated a positive atmosphere in the subcontinent. The decision to set up eight task groups has been widely welcomed. India has, by improving relations with Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, sent across the right message to Pakistan that given the political will the two countries can also look forward to an era of no conflicts and tensions. Both countries are in the midst of the campaigns to fight poverty and ignorance and they cannot afford to remain in perpetual conflict. It is to the credit of Mr. I. K. Gujral that he is steadily but surely pursuing what has come to be called the 'Gujral Doctrine'. There is some satisfaction from the fact that Mr. Nawaz Sharif has also been talking of peace and cooperation. The journey is, no doubt, a long one but taking of the first step is a great event. The people of both countries yearn for peace and the political leaders cannot ignore that for long.

July, 1997

7

India is, this month, celebrating the 50th year of its independence. These fifty years have seen a novel experiment in democracy being unfolded in a background of impoverishment, illiteracy and ignorance but led by an intensely nationalist elite who were fired with idealistic zeal. India was fortunate that a great visionary like Jawaharlal Lal Nehru was at the helm. He combined in himself the quintessence of tolerance and the urge to transform India into a modern State. The task was daunting but the fact that democracy has taken firm roots has more than compensated for some obvious shortcomings. India has stood alone, colossus like, among its neighbors as the bulwark of secularism and active, participative democracy infect. To quote Sunil Khilnani (The Idea of India-Viking), "the period of Indian history since 1947 might be seen as the adventure of a political idea; democracy." The Indian experiment is still in its early stages, and its outcome may well turn out to be the most significant, partly because of its sheer human scale, and partly because of its location."

Somehow, during the process we have witnessed a growing recourse to politicking by exploiting caste and religion. As Khilnani says, "In a fundamental sense, India does not merely have politics but is actually constituted by politics. Once a Society structured by stable hierarchies where politics had a marginal if spectacular function, India is today the most intensely political society in the world. While they were struggling for independence, Indian leaders talked about their vision of an ideal, just state which caught the

imagination of the people. Inspired by this dream, not only did ordinary politicians become heroes, but this inspiration could also be seen in the creative works of the artists, the scientists and the writers. After independence ideology took the back seat. The impersonal order of the State led to a loss of self-confidence and morality. This alienation was also responsible for a loss of faith in the State's institutions. Idealism has been replaced by a shameless materialism where questions of ethics or of good of community are brushed aside. The challenge facing India at this critical juncture is to go beyond the contentious and emotive issues of the day to define a long-term direction.

It is a matter of great shame that in the Golden Jubilee year of our independence a small ethnic group, known popularly as Kashmiri Pandits, is living as refugees in their own country. Almost all of them had to flee their homes nine years back in most tragic circumstances. A large majority has stayed back at Jammu living in sub-human conditions in makeshift camps. Both the Government of India and the State Government have done pretty little about these refugees except to provide them with some measly relief. None seems to appreciate and understand the trauma that this community has passed through. They have been, ironically, the victims of a strong phenomenon of majority versus the majority while they are a minority in their home state, they constitute the part of the majority in the whole country. Halfhearted measures are being taken to arrange their return to their homes without any thought for their security. The recent move by the State govt. to set up a Cabinet Committee for return of migrants is a cruel joke on this hapless community. Nobody is tackling the problem of unemployment among the community youth whose desperation can well be imagined. There is palpable unrest among the young Pandits, boys and girls, and they wonder whether they too should not take to arms. A local organisation has recently made some such proposal. Time is ticking away and if the situation is not tackled immediately the consequences can be disastrous. Time has come to deal with the situation.

Corruption is eating into the very vitals of the national polity. There is rat race on to loot the public exchequer. A dangerous nexus

has developed between the politicians, the bureaucrats and the businessmen to amass wealth by all means, fair or foul. This virus has hit the Public Sector as virulently as any other sector of the Government. Financial institutions like banks and insurance companies have become cesspools of corruption. There is no sense of accountability and the culprits move on merrily from one green pasture to another. Ironically, the trade Unions, which had once acted as watchdogs of these industries, too are significantly silent. Some drastic action needs to be taken to stop this public loot before the public wrath becomes uncontrollable.

August, 1997

8

Making a statement on Gandhiji's death, Jawaharlal Nehru said in the Constituent Assembly (Feb.2, 1948) : "What can we say about him except to feel humble on this occasion. To praise him we are not worthy - to praise him whom we could not follow adequately and sufficiently. It is almost doing him an injustice just to pass him by with words when he demanded work and labor and sacrifice from us; in a large measure he made this country, during the last thirty years or more, attain to heights of sacrifice which in that particular domain have never been equaled elsewhere. He succeeded in that. Yet ultimately things happened which no doubt made him suffer tremendously though his tender face never lost its smile and he never spoke a harsh word to anyone .... " The greatest Indian since Lord Buddha, Gandhiji was a person who contained the best from the past, reformed the present in which he lived and laid an agenda for the future. There was certain timelessness in his highest thoughts. On Mahatma's 128th birth anniversary '*The Salook*' issued a questionnaire to a number of persons. The response was very encouraging. This issue contains the questionnaire and some of the responses. The whole exercise was intended to revive public interest in Mahatma Gandhi and his teachings. We believe that never before were Gandhi an ideals as relevant as in today's India beset with corruption, criminalisation and acute caste conflicts. Gandhi personified Indian civilization in its true spirit. India has a great destiny awaiting her."

Mother Teresa, who died last month, left behind a huge void

difficult to fill. She will be long remembered as a person who translated ideas into action without wavering. A thin frail person, clad in -an Indian saree, bent by age and responsibility, this young girl from a village in Albania blazed a new trail in compassion and chantry. She was a together - unstoppable when she went going. Her charity and works transcended her own religion and reached out to all faiths and all sorts of people. The Missionaries of Charity that she founded kept a constant focus on relieving the misery and pain of the poor and the sick. She was "the closest we will come to seeing a saint in our times ...."

What captivated India and the world was her single minded and wholly uncommon devotion to the welfare of others, whether a destitute or a princess, "The long journey of Agnes Gonxha Bajaxhiu to that of Mother Teresa has been a saga of sacrifices, devotion and compassion. India's privilege is in the fact that she chose this country as the main base of her missionary work. She identified herself fully with the Indian ethos and has become an inalienable part of it. She was in the genre of saints.. "*The Salook*" pays its homage to Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Fate delivered a cruel blow to Princess Diana of Britain when she died in a car accident in Paris late in the night of August 30, last. Great Britain mourned, the whole world mourned this tragic death of a person who had come into the eye of the storm yet had retained a soft corner in people's mind. An unhappy marriage, unsympathetic in-laws, Diana was victim of the publicity that kept her alive otherwise. The import of her death was such that normally reticent Britons were moved to keep night vigil, in hundreds, on all days her body lay in state. The future of royalty has become a subject of hot public debate. In any case, Diana's was an extra-ordinary life that could not be ignored. She had almost come to be a global icon. The 'Salook' pays humble tributes to her.

Indo-Pak relations have, unfortunately not progressed. The whole blame is on Pakistan, which has insisted on making Kashmir the core issue. All through Pakistan has been following negative approach more to cater to her internal exigencies than for establishment of a working peace in the sub-continent. Obviously,

Pakistan's game plan is to keep the Kashmir pot boiling through a low cost, low intensity, proxy war. It looks very clear that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is unable to tear loose from the hawks led by the Pak I.S.I. The Government of India has taken proper stand on all issues. It reflects the national consensus.

We are given to understand that the Parliamentary Committee, which recently visited Jammu and Kashmir, had been moved by the plight of the migrants. The Committee visited some of the migrant camps and acquired first hand knowledge of the mode of living in these camps. We have reason to believe that the Committee will present a realistic report and on that basis further action can be taken. The uncertainty that has gripped the migrants needs to be removed, once for all.

October, 1997

9

India wakes into the New Year with a rather murky take over from 1997. A general election has been foisted on the hapless people of this country within eighteen months. Chicanery, intrigue, greed and self-interest have ruled the roost. Ideology has been pushed to the back burner and a mad race is on to acquire power and pelf. The naked dance of provoking defections made naught of the system we have adopted. There is a running debate going on whether the institutions have failed or whether the people managing the institutions have failed. We have given unto ourselves a Westminister type of parliamentary democracy, which does not seem to have taken all the basic issues of our society into consideration. It was only Gandhi's wisdom and experience that had made him ask for "each village being a republic". He believed in strengthening democracy at the grassroots level and then allows it to grow upwards. We have, on the contrary, evolved a system in which elections are held regularly at the State Assembly and Lok Sabha levels yet precious little has been done to democratise at the village level. The so called elected representatives to the Assembly and Parliament have come to identify themselves with the elite of the country thus getting more and more alienated from the mass of the village folk whom they claim to represent. The mosaic of Indian civilization is essentially based on the single thread that runs through various substrata of cultural, ethnic, religious and caste groups. Village is an important unit in this mosaic yet in our scheme of things we have gone for unchecked urbanization and industrialization, bereft of morality and ethics. A look at the western

world show that the liberal society and welfare state are on the retreat under the pressure of monetarism and crass consumerism. Indians have to ponder whether the system they have adopted is the right one. There is need for a debate on this vital point. May be there is a need for a new Constituent Assembly, which might come up with a revised system, based on the experience of last fifty years. The system, as it stands today, compels Prime Minister or a Chief Minister, rigid-from day one, to keep a close look on his supporters so as not to be dislodged unawares. This entails innumerable compromises, sometimes at the cost of the State. In our political life, corruption, and the games of defection, votebankism, caste and communal exploitation have come to be played to procure office and then stick on to it. Never before was Gandhi an approach to the building of a civil society as important as it is today. The irony is that only a few people like Lal Bahadur Shastri, Gulzari Lal Nanda, G.M. Sadiq, Mufti Mohd. Syed and Rajesh Pilot had shown the courage of staying clean in spite of holding many important offices. Is it too much to expect more and more of such people?

India has seen three governments in last 18 months. Now the country has been called upon to elect a new government. Though the country was not prepared for it yet the President exercised the only wise choice of referring back to the people. Elections are primary to a democracy and we Indians know its value. Our electorate is a highly aware group and they value their votes. They are aware that for a strong and prosperous India we need a stable government. Whoever is voted to power, we hope, will be given a clear and unambiguous mandate. Once when the late President Kennedy asked Nehru as to what did he (Nehru) want, prompt came Nehru's reply: A generation of peace. That is precisely what we need. An era of peace and stability so that we come to occupy our rightful place in comity of nations. We are destined to be a superpower both on material and moral grounds and nothing can stop us from achieving that.

While wishing our readers a happy and prosperous 1998 we also hope that the clouds of uncertainty will pass away. January happens to be the month when we celebrate our Republic Day. On this 46th Republic Day we greet all our countrymen. Father of the

nation was also assassinated in this month. We avail of this opportunity to pay our homage to him and all our martyrs who died so that we could live.

January, 1998

10

Yet another mayhem has taken place in Kashmir Valley. That too in the constituency of the Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah. 23 innocent Kashmiri Pandits, men, women and children were forced out of their homes in Wandahom Village of Gandarbal constituency late in the night of January 25, 1998. A group of armed fundamentalist militants shot down all the persons in cold blood. This is the third such incident since Dr. Farooq Abdullah took over the reins of the administration. Seven Pandits were similarly killed in Sangrampora early last year. Later, a group of three Pandit teachers were pulled out of a bus near Gool Gulab Garh in Jammu province and shot at point blank range. All the claims of the State Government have proved wrong. The Central Government cannot afford to remain a mute spectator to what is happening. India's secular polity is under severe attack and it is risky to leave things in the hands of such mavericks as Farooq Abdullah. Kashmiri Pandits cry for justice and protection. They must be provided these.

There is a certain fermentation going on in the intellectual circles of India. The golden jubilee celebrations of our freedom have afforded an appropriate opportunity for re-assessing the whole gamut of Indian situation. Lack of accountability and absence of transparency have further mystified the working of the government. Somehow, the socio-politico-economic development model adopted by us has failed to deliver the goods. Ours has been an out and out western model not at all related to the local conditions and ethics. A system totally alien to our history and heritage has been imposed

with very unpleasant results. Our failure on the education, social welfare and rural fronts has been too glaring to ignore. There has, at the same time, been unprecedented loss that we suffered as a nation due to erosion of our cultural base, our way of life and our values. The urban elite has become today totally de-undiagnosed. There is a general feeling that there has been a systemic failure in India. This is high time that we should re-assess our situation, identify our strengths and weaknesses and apply proper correctives.

February marks yet another important event for our nation. People will be called upon to vote for the 12th Lok Sabha. The biggest elections in the world are being watched with great interest by the whole world. A new Lok Sabha will be constituted by March 15. The Indian voter has to think up and decide to cast his vote for a party or alliance, which he thinks, will provide a stable government and take the country to the 21st century. Mainly, three fronts are in the fray: The United Front led by Janta Dal and supported by regional parties like T.D., D.M.K. and A.G.P. besides the leftists and Mulayam Singh's Samajvadi Party; BJP led front constituting the Shiv Sena, AIADMK, BJD, Akali Dal, Lok Shakti and Samta Party; Jana Morcha led by Laloo Yadav's RJD, BSP, Gujarat's RJP, with tacit support from Congress(I). India is crying for a good government. Can these general elections produce one?

February this year also marks the 2nd year of the publication of *The Salook*. The journal has come out, month after month, on the due date. We, at the *The Salook*, have the satisfaction that the reader has received us well and the general response has been very encouraging. That we today celebrate the 2nd anniversary of the Journal is a matter of immense satisfaction to us. We are proud to say that during its 24 month journey, the publication has not deviated, even once, from its avowed objective of strengthening the democratic and secular forces in our country. We have taken the process of thinking to a higher level and thus have set-off a very healthy debate on India's achievement and future course of action. An intellectual fermenting is on and we are proud to be a part of it.

February, 1998

11

Though the Centre and some of the State governments have taken appropriate action against the bureaucrats and officials involved in corruption to a considerable extent, yet a large section of bureaucrats and officials including those working in public sector undertakings go unnoticed though they make practically tons of money. They avail of novel methodology to create avenues for earnings. I know a Chief Executive of a public sector undertaking who has just retired. Day in and day out he used to preach honesty and national character but quietly would make limitless foreign trips lasting a number of days every time. Officials of such rank get $500 every day as D.A. subject to condition of returning such amount, which remains unspent. Actually in case of such senior Executives, foreign collaborators look after every facility during such trips but they do not return a penny back to exchequer and pocket it. Is this not corruption? Where is CBI? If they want details, *The Salook* can be of some help in tracking down such corrupt officials. Bharatiya Janata Party has appealed to the government to expeditiously enquire into those cases of corruption that have shaken the collective conscience of the Nation and punish the guilty without further delay. This appeal along with other suggestions was contained in the draft resolution, which was placed for discussion at the two-day session of the BJP's National Council Meeting in Gandhinagar on 1-2 May 1998. The draft states: "If we are to check the popular view that it is increasingly gaining ground that the high arid the mighty get away with pilfering, then we must act now."

During World War-II, the Japanese Prime Minister and War Commander, Genera! Tojo had propounded the idea of "Greater East Asia" by carving out certain eastern provinces of China, Korea and General Tojo ultimately met his doom when he was hanged till death by an Allies Court.

Likewise, Hitler had ventured on "Greater Germany" by annexing Austria, France, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and other East European countries by cleansing of Jews through torture, murder and gas chambers. But the onslaught of the Red Army hastened him to his suicide in 1945.

Learning no lesson from history but blindly imitating the course of the Islamic adventurists, Jehadists and crusaders of the medieval ages certain Muslim separatists in Kashmir, aided and abetted by the war generals of Pakistan, are embarking on the road to establish a Greater Kashmir by throwing four lakh Hindu minority out of the valley and by ethnic cleansing of certain areas already containing Hindu population in Jammu region of the State. Though they still consider Jammu and Kashmir a disputed territory purposefully declared by certain Western powers and dream day and night to go *azaad;* yet they do not realise that their dreamland, if ever established against the wishes of providence, would be usurped by the West *punjabis* and the tribal hordes of northwest. In no time their *Kashmiriyat* would be overwhelmed by their friendly enemies in Pakistan.

The Hurriyat Conference, conglomeration of 23 separatist political bodies in Kashmir, it appears, extensively support those who want to carve out Greater Kashmir by cleansing Hindus from the regions dominated by them. They are fully assured of Pakistan's continuous support to their mission. One wonders how they are permitted to visit the Pakistan Embassy by the Government of India, where they and Pakistanis conspire to destabilise India and to separate the so-called Greater Kashmir from the rest of India. Had a man like Stalin or Ataturk or Patel been there at the helm of affairs, most of the Hurriyat leaders would have been tried for engaging in anti-state activities, punished to be exiled to deserts of Rajasthan to level the sand dunes.

Aided and abetted by the Pakistan ISI, blessed by the Hurriyat, the terrorists continue to wrought havoc on Kashmir and Jammu regions. .

Militants gunned down four Hindus in Surankote on 6 May 1998, provoking large-scale violence and arson in the district headquarter town on Poonch.

Militants have abducted five villagers belonging to a particular community. The police are unable to say whether they had taken refuge to escape the bullets of militants, or kidnapped or done to death. "We have no definite details about them", a police officer of Doda told *The Hindustan Times*.

It was around 1.15 a.m. when a group of militants, armed with automatic assault rifles, forced their entry into the house of a retired Divisional Forest Officer Rattan Datta and showered the inmates with bullets. Four of them died on the spot. One among them has been identified as Deepak Kumar of Dehradun (Uttar Pradesh). Three of the others are Jaswant of Poonch Town, Rajesh Kumar and Nirdosh Kumar, two employees of the Public Health Engineering Department.

The Union Home Minister L.K Advani has rightly said on 8 May 1998 in New Delhi that Pakistan-sponsored insurgents were trying to "cleanse" the Jammu region of Hindus by indiscriminate killing. Advani said that there was definite information about a group of trained insurgents stepping up activity in Jammu to carry out ethnic cleansing. "The Government was aware of this", he added. In his view, the indiscriminate killing of Hindus and their subsequent migration could be part of Pakistan's design to attain demographic uniformity in the region to create an ideal situation for sustaining terrorism.

Discrimination on religious grounds has become so acute in Pakistani society that even elected governments have failed to protect the basic rights of Hindus and members of Scheduled Castes, largely concentrated in Sindh. In its latest report, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) state that persecution of the least resourceful of the minorities, the Scheduled Castes, has grown manifold.

According to a report, a member of the National Assembly, Krishan Bheel, told the House in Islamabad that two Hindu girls, 13 and 15 years of age, were abducted in Sanghar, kept in confinement and forcibly abused for five days, they converted and married to Muslims on the day of the country's golden jubilee celebrations. Another member told the National Assembly that recently 10 Hindu girls had been abducted, converted and married off. Such incidents are recurrent, he added, says the report.

What often comes to the rescue of the perpetrators of violence against the minorities is the blasphemy law-a potent weapon in Pakistan. In one such instance, Arib Bheel, an S.C. doctor in Khipro, led a protest march of his community against the kidnapping of two Bheel girls.

But to the shock of the entire country, he was charged with burning the holy Quran along with the belongings of the caretaker of the Jangshah shrine and arrested.

As an instance of open violence, the report cites the case of Hiryan, widow of Bhojo Meghwar of Goth Kachhelo, who warned that she would immolate herself and her two minor sons before the Chief Minister's residence if the murderers of her husband, who were now threatening her and her children, were not held. She had named two influential figures of the area in the F.I.R.

There are instances where the judiciary did not come to the rescue of the minorities either. When magistrate Rai Ali Raza of Jaranwala allegedly abducted Tarachand and seized his trolley and 150 bags of wheat, the victim tired of procrastinated justice, managed to knock at the door of the Lahore High Court. The court ordered registration of a case against the magistrate but the local police ignored the order.

The extent of religious discrimination is evident from an appeal received by the HRCP. Pancho Bhell of village Wahoro in Mithi said that the village zamindar, Qaim Mohammad Shah, has been harassing the S.C. community for a long time with the pretext of keeping an eye on their land.

While protesting against the damage done to Hussain's property

(over his nude painting of Sita and Hanuman) by the warlords among the "Hindu" Sangh Parivar—30 Bajrang Dal activists, the independent-minded artist community has argued that the word "intolerance" was uncommon to the Hindu ethos. "We have Khajuraho, Ajanta images. The Hindu pantheon has gods frolicking in heaven. The fact that you worship the colourful nature of Hindu mythology."

However, this kind of reasoning can be countered by pointing out that there is a difference between Goddess like Indrani who are portrayed in a more colourful light and Saraswati and Sita who represent learning and virtuous living. Moreover, one has marked that like many other artists, Hussain seems to be having weakness for young fair sex. The people are very well familiar with his obsession for Hindi film actress Madhuri Dixit; his continuous watching of her films and his obsession for painting Madhuri in various colourful forms. Perhaps the best observation on the world known painter's obsessions has recently been made by the noted Indian Muslim scholar, Dr. Rafiq Zakaria in his Article. "Of an unbridled brush and Hindu ire." For the benefit of the readers, we are reproducing the relevant sections of the article: "The nude painting of Sita, one of the most adored Hindu goddesses by the world-famous artist M.F. Hussain, a non-practising Muslim, who is better versed in Hindu Mythology than in the tenets of his own religion, has violated the Quranic injunction which clearly states in Surah Ahzab verse 59 that women should always be presented in the public with "their outer garments over their persons." One of the leading and most influential Urdu dailies, *Inqilab* of Mumbai, carried a scathing editorial against the artist, proving decisively how anti-Islamic his painting is. His supporters may defend his expression, but to my mind his effort is pregnant with dangerous consequences for the preservation of peace and communal harmony in India. I condemn, of course, the vandalism of the Bajrang Dal, but Hussain needs to exercise restrain in the unbridled use of his brush.

"The tragic part of this unfortunate episode is that it gives one more huddle to some Hindus to malign Islam and its Prophet. Hussain's action is taken by them as an attack by the community on the character of their most cherished goddess. The media played up

the story; it did not bother to give the Muslim reaction, which was unequivocally expressed by the Urdu press. For instance, Farooq Ansari in *Urdu Times* described Hussain's painting as 'the most lurid exhibition of art which has brought nothing but disgrace to Muslims'. He called upon Hussain to refrain "from sensationalising his art in order to earn lakhs of rupees."

The prejudice against Islam is, unfortunately, so deep-rooted that even a small incident often results in a bloody riot; have never cared to understand, much less to explain to their followers that an anti-Hindu act of some misguided Muslims, be they rulers or the ruled, whether in the past or the present, are manifestly condemned by the Holy Quran.

Before sending this issue to the press, there was a news item that Hussain has apologised in writing for his controversial painting. Better late than never. Welcome Hussain for amending your erratic behaviour.

June, 1998

12

In these columns of last month, I had made a reference to Pak and International conspiracy to create base for "Greater Kashmir" by engineering migration of Kashmiri Hindus and other minority community members. More than 40 families of minority community migrated recently from four villages of Anantnag District. Those families from minority community who had not so far migrated from Mattan Town have now been served notices by the militant outfits to leave the town or face the consequences. Right from 1990 members of minority community are fleeing from the Kashmir Valley and also some minority families have migrated from districts of Doda, Poonch and Rajouri. While, we are drum beating the near return of normalcy in the Valley and inflow of tourists and also film shootings etc., the ground reality is that minority community families are still migrating from the Valley and other districts which are claimed to be part of so called 'Greater Kashmir'. This is high time that both, State and Central Governments address themselves to these grave problems and ensure return of the Kashmiri Pandits back to the Valley.

Armed militants gunned down 25 Hindus and critically wounded six others in the Champnari village in Doda district on June 19, 1998.

At about 1.30 p.m., a shower of bullets fired from AK-47 assault rifles fell on the members of two marriage parties who had halted at Champnari to have tea and snacks. Although no militant outfit has claimed responsibility for the killings, the police said they

had evidence that a pro-Pakistan group was involved.

Director-General of Police Gurbachan Jagat said, "One of the killers has been identified as Muzzafar of *Hizb-ul-Mujahadeen* operating under Riyaz Babbar." However, there was no word from *Hizb-ul-Mujahadeen* on this.

The militants used a Maruti van, hijacked by them at gunpoint on the Doda-Dessa road, to reach Champnari where they committed the massacre.

Relatives of the victims killed in the massacre. No human rights activists organisation have come out to condemn this gruesome killing. I wonder why the Traditional *Rudalees* of human rights violations have not spoken a word to condemn this crime on the humanity by the militants. Ex-gratis relief of Rs. One lakh to second of kin killed in this incident is not going to balm the very deep injured feelings and miseries of those who have been affected. Money cannot bring back to life the dead who have been killed in this incident. No amount of explanation by the State Government can absolve them of their responsibilities. They must own their fault and laxity shown in this matter.

The worst-ever massacre this year was at Phankot in Udhampur district in the Jammu Region where militants hacked 26 to death on April 17. Earlier, 23 Kashmiri Pandits were killed in Wandhama, near Ganderbal on Jan. 25, on the eve of Republic Day derailing the Government's plans to restore Kashmiri Pandits to their homes in the Valley.

This massacre at Champnari was an incident waiting to happen as the number of militants—both foreigners and locals—had been swelling, and the security forces were stretched to their limits in Doda-hilly district spread over a very huge area.

However, such massacre of people of a particular community gives signals that the minorities were insecure in the State under the present State Government.

Militants have now again struck on June 23, by way of planting bomb on Jammu-Baribrahmina railway track resulting in derailment of a number of coaches of Shalimar Express going to Delhi from

Jammu. A number of people were injured. I appeal to both the Central and State Governments to wake up to the realities and address itself to core problem of putting halt to the migration.

Kashmiris are basically peace-loving people. Government of India should not put all the eggs in one basket. Let it divert its attention and listen to the grievances of the people. Leading Congress leader Mufti Mohammad Sayed has asked the Central Government to have an open dialogue with the people of Kashmir and their representatives. Only then this perennial problem can be solved. Government of India should not feel shy to talk to leaders like Shabir Shah and others who have an excellent image in public. Mufti Mohammad Sayed should also be taken into confidence. The Kashmiri people are basically opposed to a merger with Pakistan. So it is the first and foremost duty of the State and the Centre that their genuine demands should be addressed to.

Ghulam Mohammed Shah, former Chief Minister of J&K, has lent his voice to the chorus for trilateral talks to resolve the 'Kashmir issue'. Shah, who is currently engaged in re-activating his party, the Awami National Conference, rebuffed the claims that Kashmir was a bilateral issue. He insisted that the solution of this 'problem' lay only through tripartite interaction between the three parties to the dispute.

This theory was first introduced by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, a secessionist conglomerate, and also supported by the Jammu & Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party.

Shah, the estranged brother-in-law of Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, told the working committee that "only a tripartite interaction between the three parties to the dispute, taking into account the wishes of the people of the disputed territory, can bring about a peaceful solution." This implies that the whole State of Jammu and Kashmir was a 'disputed territory'. This stand runs contrary to the Indian stands that the 'dispute relates only to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir'. However, this stance is in conformity with the secessionist's viewpoint.

Political observers have read these statements as Shah's desperate attempts to gain acceptability among the people of

Kashmir and also as an effort to be heard along with the other voices in Kashmir.

Sepoy Mohd. Bashir of the 815 Mujahid Battalion was caught on April 27 by an Army patrol near Kiran Village across the Kishen Ganga River in Kashmir Valley's Keran Sector. The soldier, whose paramilitary battalion forms part of the Pakistan's Kel-based 32 Infantry brigade, was attending a three-week shiper rifle course this March at Nilam located close to the LoC when he claims to have "fallen in love" with a woman.

"We used to talk mostly in sign language. I told her that I loved her and wanted to marry her—to which she nodded in agreement," Bashir told a correspondent of The Times of India adding that he wanted to take her for his wife as she was suffering from polio. Bashir, who hails from Poonch district of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) proceeded on two months leave after completion of the course.

"On April 23, I returned to Nilam, did a reconnaissance of the area, and then crossed over on the night of April 26. No one opened the door, so I forced myself in", Bashir revealed while confessing that Shabnam's parents reproved his proposal. During an altercation, Shabnam's father hit him on the head and he fell unconscious. After he regained consciousness, he left the house but later he was found near the village in a semi-conscious state.

Stating that he was a witness to ISI's involvement in aiding terrorism in the Valley during his six-month duty as guard at an ISI detachment in Kel, the Pakistani soldier said, "We maintained a register of all militants reporting to the detachment after arrival from India. Before sending them to various training camps they were thoroughly screened.

"The ISI's Kashmir Cell is in Islamabad and is headed by Brig. Riaz, who visited the location several times. They run three types of camps—training camps, which are fenced and heavily guarded; storage camps for arms; and launching camps. Most militants are also ISI spies and recruits from POK and Pakistan. Majority of them have criminal background. They distribute magazines and other literature to incite people to join as recruits", he said while giving

examples of how several Pakistani officers, he had served with, are engaged in rampant corruption. "They treated soldiers like dirt and make us do menial labour and deny us adequate rations," he said.

Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee has hinted that India could retaliate if the United States rigorously imposed economic sanctions in response to its nuclear tests. In an interview to the Washington Post—his first to an American newspaper after assuming office in March—he said, "If the sanctions declared by some countries are indeed imposed, India would have no option but to take measures that minimise their impact on the Indian economy."

"It would be a pity if economic cooperation between India and the United States were to be adversely affected, both countries would stand to lose a lot," he added.

Vajpayee issued the threat, to counter what he called "unjustified" sanctions, in written responses that were purposely delayed, the daily says, quoting an External Affairs Ministry spokesman, until after the G-8 group of industrialised nations last week announced a joint plan to delay World Bank and other multilateral loans to India and Pakistan. Sanctions required by the US Law also would cut off non-humanitarian US development aid to India.

The daily says, 'Vajpayee's statement came at a time when the United States and other nuclear powers have been attempting to persuade India and Pakistan to end the nuclear tests, each of them have conducted in the last month and refrain from building and deploying nuclear weapons systems. While suggesting he would not agree to those demands, it points out that Vajpayee's statement indicated that India is now planning to deploy an extensive system of weapons or the infrastructure needed to control and safeguard them.

"India's nuclear doctrine is qualitatively different from that of other nuclear weapons states", said Vajpayee, "therefore, we do not need to, or intend to, replicate the kind of command and control structures which they required. Our approach is to have a credible deterrent which should prevent the use of these weapons."

He said that India carried out the tests in part to prod the five established nuclear states—the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France—to agree to plans to disarm. "We thought that if there is nuclear disarmament it will make the world a better place to live in and also provide security for us," he said.

The agreement between the Government and the Suzuki Motor Corporation of Japan to curtail the term of the Managing Director of the Maruti Udyog Limited (MUL), R.S.S.L.N. Bhaskarudu was announced all of a sudden by the Industry Minister, Sikander Bakht on June 8, 1998. Except for the key negotiators involved in working out the compromise, few outsiders had an inkling of it. Yet the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, had no hesitation in claiming in Parliament that the agreement was arrived at behind anyone's back and the whole government and the country is behind the decision. Vajpayee found it necessary to go to the rescue of his colleague—the Industry Minister —since the decision obviously was climb down on the part of the Government.

The former United Front government had asserted its right to appoint Bhaskarudu to the post much to the chagrin of Japanese partner. Suzuki had made no secret of its intention to have a decisive say in key appointments, irrespective of its rights in the matter. The price government had to pay to secure the continued cooperation of Suzuki was not to the liking of the Opposition in Parliament. Members of the Congress Party, the Janta Dal, the CPI (M) and CPI were not happy at the Government succumbing to the Japanese partner's pressure, which would set a bad precedent. In fact, the former Industry Minister, Murasoli Maran, saw the deal as a "total sale out and a slap on the face of India."

It was Maran who had pushed through the appointment of Bhaskarudu for a five-year term as Managing Director in September 1997. His term will now end in December 1999, and Jagdish Khattar, currently MUL Executive Director, who is in the good books of the Japanese, will take over as Managing Director. Suzuki Motor Corporation, which has agreed to withdraw its case for international arbitration over the appointment, will also have its Japanese nominee appointed as Chairman in place of Prabir Gupta,

a Secretary to the Union Government. The criticism of the Opposition that the agreement exposes the "*Swadeshi*" protestations of the BJP is difficult to answer. Bakht has tried to gloss over this aspect by saying that it is in line with the *swadeshi* agenda to welcome foreign investment in high-tech areas and infrastructure.

Meanwhile, certain retaliatory measures against sanctions have already started operating on mini scale. For instance, the people and students in Bombay, Jaipur, Chandigarh and Delhi have expressed their outrage by pouring down the Pepsi and Coca-Cola bottles in drains in quite a big way.

Legislators will now have a taste of "*Swadeshi* thunder" in the Central Hall of the Assembly—thanks to nuclear explosions at Pokhran and the subsequent sanctions imposed by Western countries.

Cold drinks manufactured by multinationals Pepsi and Coca-Cola have been banned by Assembly Speaker Kesari Nath Tripathi. The decision has been taken in retaliation to the sanctions imposed by the United States of America. Since Pepsi and Coca-Cola were manufactured by the American companies, they will not be sold in the State Assembly premises.

The legislators will, however, have a choice of *lassi* or *mattha*—the traditional Indian drinks or cold drinks manufactured by Indian companies. The decision of the speaker to take retaliatory action against the multinational companies may inspire other organisations that may also boycott the products of multinational companies.

Whether a similar order is issued by the State Government or not will be clear in the coming days.

Meanwhile in the third week of June 1998 the United States outlined sanctions worth about $ 2 billion against India. They would affect $ 17 billion—especially for infrastructure—from International Finance Institutions (IFIs) apart from suspension of $ 800 million aid from the US Exim Bank and the OPIC as well as credits by certain US government agencies.

As of now, the Indian private sector does not appear to be

affected by the sanctions in any explicit manner. But they interfered with the free flow of trade investment and technology, which would affect US exports and jobs. However, delivery of previously approved defence equipment/services to India stands suspended. There will also be restriction on the sale of certain goods as well as opposition by the US to the World Bank/IFC aid to India. The United States has also gained G-8 support to postpone consideration of non-basic human need loans for India by IFIs. Thus $1.17 billion in IFI lending has been postponed to India. Such sanctions will affect the power projects largely.

Anyhow, these sanctions have given breathing space to India. Though Delhi cannot get loans from US banks, but the firms can do business. Thus the US banks are allowed to do business with quasi-government entities thus allowing enough scope to American firms to continue their activities in the sub-continent. The loophole will allow US banks to deal with Indian banks, many of which are partially owned by the government. Thus the sanctions do not cover the operations of private banks. However, the sanctions allow the passage of humanitarian aid, which is broadly defined as anything that involves education, rural development, health, low cost housing, sewage, etc.

But the sanctions block loans by multilateral organisations and a virtual embargo on dual use items.

Indian analysts say the sanctions allow New Delhi some breathing room. "It is not as bad as it could have been. But primarily the US companies have done their bit to preserve their self-interest and in the process, we have also benefited a little," a Washington-based representative of an Indian trade company said.

Senior administration officials acknowledge the sanctions are calibrated to avoid doing damage to American business. US firms will be allowed to invest in India although they may not get coverage from American banks.

Though the sanctions may affect the power sector considerably but the Union Power Minister, R. Kumar Mangalam, asserted that they would have little or no impact.

However, Washington has come down hard on dual use items and has imposed a virtual embargo in this area. India will be denied dual use items on the slightest suspicion although officials say, "Washington will continue to favorably consider on ease-by-ease basis transactions which do not support nuclear missile or inappropriate military activities."

July, 1998

13

When Chowdhary Mohd. Aslam was inducted as Pradesh Congress President in J & K, both Mufti Mohd.Sayeed MP and Ghulam Nabi Azad the two Congress heavy weights threw their lot behind him. Both accompanied him to Jammu and Srinagar to rousing public and Party receptions and while addressing Party meeting in the Office Compound of the P.C.C., Mr. Azad swore by Party unity and impressed upon the Party workers for closing their ranks and unitedly project the Party image. He talked in terms of applying healing balm to the hurt Kashmiri psyche at that time.

And today both are separately touring the State. While the Mufti is consistently talking in terms of opening a purposeful dialogue with all the public opinion makers and militant groups in order to get total normalcy back in the State; Mr. G. N. Azad has made volte face and says—no talks with anyone unless they accept the accession.

I happen to know both the leaders personally. Both are staunch nationalists. National interest is the ultimate aim in the minds of both the leaders but yet both differ in their perception to achieve the goal.

Mufti Sahib is a man of the masses with a very vast experience in politics. The late D.P.Dhar used to speak about him as a future hope for Congress in J & K State. Even the late Bakshi Ghulam Mohd. Ex Prime Minister of J & K often used to admire the then young Mufti although the latter was in the opposite camp led by late G. M.Sadiq and Syed Mir Qasim.

Mufti's political understanding has realism, pragmatism and logic. He is definitely making the Congress to limp back to prime position on the political horizon of Kashmir.

Azad *Saheb* comparatively young and energetic, is a product of seventies and by dint of his hard labour and good luck has achieved the present position. He is ambitious and wants to establish his firm foot hold in the Dogra land i.e. Jammu. I wish both the leaders to work together and stop singing to different tunes. The people of J & K want to get rid of the present regime in J & K. A united Congress can give better governance.

I wish and hope Azad Sahib sees the reason and follows in the footsteps of Mufti Mohd. Syed.

Heroin industry in Pakistan has grown very fast since 1979 due to active involvement of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). A detailed information about this nexus has been furnished in a book titled, "The Bear Trap" written by Mohammad Yusuf, Chief of the Afghan Bureau of the ISI from 1983 to 1987. This book provides a detailed description of the activities of ISI in organising the heroin trade in Pakistan.

Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, in his statement to the Washington Post in September 1996 admitted that in 1991, General Afzal Beg, the then Chief of the Army Staff, and the then Director General of the ISI had together sought an official permission from him to smuggle heroin for financing "covert military operations" in Punjab and Kashmir. As the ISI was only nominally under the control of Prime Minister, they were only informing him as to what was actually happening.

The CIA had prepared a secret 93-page report on the involvement of ISI in the heroin trafficking in Pakistan.

The ISI, along with some fanatical groups in Pakistan, are the main cause of narco-terrorism in a big way in the region; rightly alleged Afghan Ambassador to India, Masood Khalili in an interview to *The Pioneer* on 25th August 1998. He added, "The recent US air strikes on terrorist training facilities along the Pak-Afghan border clearly show that Kashmiri militants are getting

trained by the ISI, directly or indirectly. According to my knowledge Osama Bin Laden is definitely training Kashmiri militants in a big way."

There are many Taliban sympathisers among 100 odd Afghan shop-owners of Ballimaran in Delhi. Several Afghan nationals come to Delhi every month and stay at guest houses and lodges in the by-lanes of Ballimaran. Ostensibly, they come here for trading in carpets and dry-fruits but on their way back, they are known to have ferried large quantities of a particular chemical (acetone anhydride) used in the treatment of poppy seeds and manufacture of heroin. These chemicals were booked on flights of a particular airline to Jalalabad in Afghanistan, a stronghold of Taliban militia. Before November 1996, when chemical was declared a notified drug, 20 to 25 tonnes were sent every month to Jalalabad. Taliban thrive mainly on narcotics trade.

The ISI is reported to have its agents like Munna Bajrangi, active in various parts of India. Munna was recently killed in police encounter on llth September 1998 in North-West Delhi. He was involved in drug trafficking on the instructions of ISI.

Heroin money has swamped the economics and politics of Pakistan. The UN International Drug Control Programme (UNIDCP) had estimated the total size of Pakistan's heroin industry at around Rs 74 billion in terms of 1994 prices. This worked out to about five per cent of the 1992-93 GDP and 20-25 per cent of the total estimated "shadow" or "parallel" economy.

The domestic heroin market of Rs 35 billion is about half of the total revenue of heroin industry. The domestic market is so big that the heroin industry can be sustained without exports. Around three million Pakistanis are known to be drug addicts and their number is growing at the rate of eight per cent per annum.

It is quite disquieting to note that the poorest 20 per cent of Pakistan's population accounts for about half of the total number of drug addicts in Pakistan.

Pakistan is being run almost as a drug Mafia. However, in other Nations heavily involved in drugs such as those in Latin America or

South-East Asia, the state may have been permissive and/or officials might be making money out of drugs, but none equals Pakistan where state itself uses large amounts of drug money for various state-sponsored operations and terrorist activities.

Drug barons are running a parallel government in Pakistan like their counterparts in Latin America. They have more resources than the government agencies that are trying to control them. The drug barons are operating in connivance with the defence forces. This horrified immoral marriage of convenience with drug barons is what Government of Pakistan is made of.

Mushtaq Ahmad Gilkar alias Haider AH, the Chief Administrator of Hizbul Mujahideen (HUM) was arrested by a team of the North district police on August 17 this year. Three associates of Mushtaq were also arrested. The police recovered about 1.33 kg of RDX, 2.9 kg of gunpowder, 10 slabs TNT and several primers as well as safety fuses.

Significantly, now the money does not come into the country by way of cash alone. Some Kashmiri and Pakistani merchants, called *Savaris*, are now crossing the border with saleable items in tow.

"The *Savaris* come to the Capital and after selling the goods they deposit the so earned money with the militants who in turn pass on these huge sums of money to their counterparts in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere". What is the Central Government doing about it?

October, 1998

14

I had the good fortune of having born in the land of *Rishis* and *Sufis* i.e. Kashmir. My upbringing had lot of influence of the composite culture, with the result I gained fairly good knowledge about Islam and Sufism made a deep impression on me and on my thinking. I am not shy of admitting and many of my Hindu friends and close relatives also know that I can recite '*Kalima*' and during the course of my daily drill, unwittingly, I recite it many a times. Despite this, I continue to remain as devoted Hindu and continue to be proud of the faith in which I was born. My religion has taught me tolerance and respect for other religions.

One is really shocked to read about the staging of walk-out and raising of derogatory slogans by the non-BJP Education Ministers at the time of performance of *Saraswati Vandana* at the recently held States Education Ministers' Conference at New Delhi. Their charge of calling the *Vandana* a religious affair is nothing ...but sheer politicking - just opposition for opposition sake, reminding one of the famous fable of "The Lamb and the Wolf". It may be reminded to them that the *Saraswati Vandana* has been a tradition, a culture since times immemorial of Indian civilisation, in no case a religious affair confined to Hindus only. Going back to the antiquity of our history, one finds that the excavations at *Mohenjodaro* and *Harappa* have revealed that the predecessors of Aryans—Dravidians had their own Goddess of Learning. Some statues of this Goddess, along with that of Lord Shiva, have been often displayed at the exhibitions organised by the Archeological Department of India. The

Dravidians were followed by the Aryans who regularly performed *Saraswati Vandana* at the opening of any educational institution. Later on, the present day. Hindu system also picked it up.

The Christian ministers attending the education conference should know that the Greeks and Romans had had their own Goddesses of Learning. A reference to this can be found in Gibbon's Decline and Downfall of Roman Empire and a visit to Athens' historical ruins. In all the Christian educational institutions, God is cited as source of all knowledge in prayer held before the starting of the classes.

Our Akali friends know that the Sikh Gurus never displayed any repugnance or disliking over the performance of *Saraswati Pooja*. The *bhajans* recited by the Singh Brothers on the TV programme do also include the *Saraswati Vandana*.

Even the folio (Muslim students) pray to *Allah* as a fountain of all knowledge, requesting Him to shower knowledge on them before starting the morning classes at the *madarsas* at Deoband and several other holy places and mosques. With great enthusiasm and zeal they recite couplets of Dr. Mohammed Iqbal:

Lab pe aati hai dua ban ke tamanna meri, zindagi shamma ki surat ko khudaya meri (Oh Allah, I pray to you—Fountain of knowledge—that our life may take the bright shape of *shamma* by your blessings.)

Our Communist comrades may be aware that in West Bengal—ruled by them—the *Saraswati* Day is a gazzetted holiday. Their blind opposition to all our cultural heritage could never make them popular all over the country. Their such policies have in reality confined their influences to only a few pockets in India. History and glorious antiquity of India have taught them no lesson.

Saraswati Vandana had been performed at the state and social function attended by Jawaharlal Nehru and Raj endra Prasad in their times of ruling this country. Similar state functions have also been held during the tenure of Inder Kumar Gujral as Prime Minister and K. R. Narayanan as President.

Vedas and *Upanishads* were thoroughly read by German

scientists and scholars to enhance their knowledge of atom and other scientific matters. But their inclusion in school curriculum in India is taken as a crime, unethical, communal and what not. Hindus constitute the biggest—in a sense—an overwhelming chunk of Indian population. Anything taken from their cultural writings and heritage become overnight communal and non-secular. I do not know why?

November, 1998

15

The death anniversary of late G.M.Sadiq falls due on December 12. *The Salook* pays its homage to the departed soul. He was one of the leading lights of Kashmir's struggle for freedom. Sauve gentleman to a fault G. M. Sadiq was a thinker and a visionary. Deeply influenced by the progressive ideology he was in the forefront of the struggle to obtain justice for the working class and the peasants. His conviction in democracy and secularism was deep-rooted. He was convinced that it was only in the democratic secular India that the future of Kashmir lay. His greatest contribution towards that was the measures taken during his regime (1964-1971), to bring Jammu and Kashmir legally, constitutionally and emotionally closer to the rest of the country. Changes in the nomenclature of the Sadri Riyasat and Prime Minister to Governor and Chief Minister and extension of the jurisdiction of Supreme Court and Central Election Commission were far-reaching moves that, at once, removed the emotional barriers between the people of the State and the rest of India. Imbued with a high sense of personal integrity, Sadiq Saheb, was a great votary of clean and transparent public life. Then again in 1969 when Smt. Indira Gandhi was pitted against the Congress Syndicate, Sadiq Saheb took the lead and actively garnered support for Smt. Gandhi. He played a significant role in the election of late V.V. Giri as the President of India. This total identification with Smt. Indira Gandhi and other progressive forces in the country was a wise move keeping in view the interests of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Sadiq Saheb had also played a significant role in 1939 when Muslim Conference was converted

into National Conference. The most significant event, however, was the merging of National Conference with Indian National Congress in July 1964. The event broke the last barriers that existed between the people of the State and rest of the country. Unfortunately, Sadiq Saheb's life was cut short by his death in December 1971. He has carved a name for himself permanently on the pages of Indian history.

Striking a personal note, the late leader had initially disliking for me for a number of years. I was known to belong to what was called the pro-Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad camp. I had, at the young age of twenty, become the President of J & K Youth Congress and the Sadiq camp was not happy at that. They would administer pin pricks at all available opportunities. The climax came in 1970 when I was detained under Preventive Detention Act (PDA). I had to fight a long legal battle. Infact, mine was a unique case in the State's legal history that the High Court ordered an honourable release of a PDA detinue. Probably having realised the injustice done to me, Sadiq Saheb later come to rely on me, more and more. Since then our relations improved and I came to be one of his greatest admirers. I was highly impressed with his honesty and integrity, clarity of thought and a vision of a bright future for the people of the State. Sadiq Saheb was one of the giants on Kashmir political scene and he shall be remembered for his qualities. Unfortunately, my close association with him was rather short lived as death snatched him soon in December 1971.1 pay my personal homage to the great son of the soil. We are carrying two articles on the late G. M. Sadiq which are penned by his two erstwhile colleagues namely G.M. Mir Rajpuri, ex-speaker J & K Assembly and Mr. Noor Mohammad ex-Education Minister in the Cabinet of Shri G.M. Sadiq.

The entire world would celebrate Christmas this month. Never before was the world in need of the teachings of Lord Jesus Christ as today. He gave to the humanity the message of love, compassion and brotherhood. Said the Lord: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness;

for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

"The Salook" wishes all Christians, throughout the world, a happy merry Christmas.

"Lord Avebury, the British Liberal Democrat Parliamentarian and member of the House of Lords was recently in India along with Dr. Siraj Shah. Dr. Shah heads a human rights N.G.O. in London and Lord Avebury is its patron. They have been advocating the cause of Kashmiris and have tried twice to hold a conference in London to find an everlasting solution to Kashmir imbroglio. Unfortunately although they invited men from different walks of life from Indian part of Kashmir and the Pak-occupied part, but the proposed conference could not take place. Lord Avebury finally decided to come in person and see the plight of Kashmiris. So on his fact finding mission along with Dr. Siraj Shah, Lord Avebury went to Jammu on November 23, 1998. He visited the migrant camps and saw for himself the plight and the sub-human conditions under which migrant Kashmiri Pandit families were living in different camps in Jammu. On November 24, 1998, he was invited to a dinner by veteran Kashmiri leader Mufti Mohammad Syed (M.P). Lord Avebury was so much moved by the plight of Kashmiri Pandit refugees in Jammu that he mentioned the same immediately after he came to dinner at Mufti Sahib's house in Srinagar. Some leading lights of the State Congress including the charismatic CLP leader Mehbooba Mufti, ex-minister Ghulam Hassan Mir. Taj Mohiuddin, Ghulam Qadir Pardesi and Ghulam Nabi Mir besides myself were present for this dinner. Mufti Sahib, Mehbooba Mufti and Ghulam Hassan Mir stressed for a dialogue with Kashmiri leadership including Hurriyat leaders, Shabir Shah and others to find everlasting solution to the problem. Lord Avebury also met Shabir Shah, along with his delegation, APHC delegation and also other delegations who gave him their version of the problem. Lord Avebury condemned militancy and innocent killings. Let us hope that he remains in constant touch with developments of the State and tells the world about the source of militancy.

The result of the Assembly elections in the States of Delhi, Rajasthan. Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram have come. The first three states have gone to the Congress with big margin, but Congress has lost in Mizoram to local outfits. It is high time for BJP leadership to have honest introspection about their crushing defeat in these elections. The Congress leadership should understand that the victory in these elections is essentially not an endorsement to their policies, but sheer helplessness of the voters when they had again to try Congress and now they should come up to the expectations of the voters.

December, 1998

16

The need of the hour is a change in the mindset of two Nations, namely India and Pakistan. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's bus ride to Lahore will go a long way in creating a conducive political environment apart from underlining the urgent necessity of smoothening the rough edges in the bilateral ties. It is certainly not the time for chest-beating, but it is the right time for fence-mending.

Atal Behari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif seized every opportunity provided by an impromptu visit to underscore the new thinking at the highest political levels. Speeches, gestures and the joint declaration in Lahore all reinforced the message that India and Pakistan have to move on and find solutions to the issues that divide them. Equally significant is the fact that the outcome of the Vajpayee-Sharif meeting should be called the Lahore Declaration.

It was exactly 59 years ago that the All India Muslim League came out with the original Lahore Declaration calling for the creation of Pakistan. The choice of venue, which was decided upon by Pakistan, may or may not have been accidental, but its significance should be fairly obvious.

It is undeniable fact that despite the bitterly acrimonious history of India-Pakistan relationship, with its roots going to the pre-British period of the sub-continent's past, every new effort to make a fresh beginning is characterised by great optimism.

Who could take this initiative? It needed political will by

political leaders to break impasse. Vajpayee, while breaking the barriers of protocol and made a gesture of being elder brother, took this wise step.

Without any doubts, heading the coalition government under the constant threats from his allies and oppositions he showed his worth and capability of being a Prime Minister of this great country. His visit has opened the visions of the political leaders there and here to think in positive directions. One thing is clear that neither side can militarily change the Line of Control (LoC) when both the countries are equipped with nuclear weapons.

The predominant question in everyone's minds is whether this meeting with all its attendant fanfare, was just a gimmick or whether in the fullness of time it will yield some important benefits to both countries. On balance, it seems very likely that with the exception of Kashmir, on a host of other issues, India and Pakistan will begin to bridge the gap that now exists between them. This will be no mean achievement, especially in the context of the post-Pokhran-II developments. In fact, to the extent that the rest of the world is convinced that India and Pakistan will end up nuking each other, the agreement to exchange information in advance about missile testing and certain other matters pertaining to their newly acquired nuclear status should go a long way towards dispelling this belief.

However, everyone knows that unless Pakistan drops its insistence on India holding a plebiscite in Kashmir and accepts the LoC as the international border, tensions between Pakistan and India will remain, ready to be exploited by political parties. From India's point of view, the tragedy is that no Pakistani government can afford to drop Kashmir, partly because of the Army, which continues to be a major political force, and partly because of competitive population in domestic politics.

No doubt a series of meeting at various levels will be needed to make a success of their present endeavours. But Vajpayee's trip marked a defining moment, as he said, because it was expected to be a turning point where the emphasis will change from suspicion and hostility to trust and cooperation.

It will, certainly, be a while before we achieve something big,

positive and purposeful and, till then, every effort should be made to make the ball of dialogue roll on smoothly. Accord or no accord, there must at least be some progress on confidence building measures

March, 1999

17

Ever heard of Kashmir Study Group? Well it is a US-based organisation headed and funded by Farooq Kathwari, a U.S. based Kashmir millionaire dealing in furniture. He has taken upon himself the onerous task of achieving the unthinkable providing the ultimate solution to Kashmir imbroglio. Mind you, he is not alone in this endeavour; on the contrary, he has a coterie of former bureaucrats, ex-Army Chiefs from India and Pakistan and not to mention the always eager Phillip Talbott and Ainsbe Aimbree from US, to fall back on.

Farooq Kathwari was recently in India ostensibly to attend a religious ceremony held after the death of his father Khwaja Ghulam Mohammad. I am informed that the red-tape regarding his travel documents like visa and other things was lowered at the behest of Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah.

This was conceivably done to enable him to offer his prayers at his father's grave. But there was more to it than meets the eye. Although Farooq Kathwari has visited India and Pakistan scores of times earlier; but this time the bereaved Kathwari seemed more inclined to hobnob with the cross-section of social and political spectrum of the country. I am told he received tácit patronage from the administration in arranging such meetings. Besides social celebrities and political heavyweights he also met Kashmir Governor, Girish Saxena and Kashmir Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah, ex-Prime Minister I. K. Gujral, the redoubtable Congress M. P. from Anantnag Mufti Mohammad Sayed and Saifuddin Soz

and fiery CLP leader of J & K Legislature Mehbooba Mufti and a galaxy of other leaders.

When curiosity got better of me, I sought an appointment with him and consequently met him at Hotel Imperial in Delhi. This meeting revealed some interesting facts. Like I had a pleasant surprise to know that he is grandson of Kashmiri business tycoon late Amalal—Mattoo better known as G. Ahmad Jeweller. And incidently his father Khwaja Ghulam Mohammad held the rank of Minister in Azad Kashmir Government in Muzzaffarabad for some time before he migrated back to Kashmir.

When quizzed about the mystery behind his surname Kathwari as evidently it was quite contrary to his family name of Mattoo, he harked back to his student days when he saw the State subject issued by J & K Government wherein he found that his surname was mentioned as Kathwari nee Mattoo. Hence he opted for Kathwari.

Farooq Kathwari completed his graduation from S. P. College, Srinagar in the sixties before migrating to U.S.A. It is a coincidence that I am also a product of S. P. College. My distant cousin Ashok Vaishnavi was his classmate in the college and both of them were in the college cricket team which was captained by Farooq Kathwari.

All through my conversation with him I could smell his close proximity to US Administration officials. On the whole he sounded quite appreciative of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's historic Lahore visit and in the same breath he exhuded immense optimism about Jaswant Singh-Talbott talks.

Coming back to his brainchild—the paper titled, "Kashmir A way Forward," one must say that it is backed by stalwarts from different fields. Those consulted in this formulation include former Indian Foreign Secretary S. K. Singh, Vice-Admiral K. K. Nayar, former Pakistan Foreign Secretary Niaz Naik, Gen. K. M. Arif, Army Chief under the Zia-ul-Haq regime, Howard Sheffer, former US Ambassador to Pakistan, Phillip Talbott and Ansbe Aimbree.

S. K. Singh, while elaborating on this subject, highlighted the contents of this new approach in detail. S. K. Singh said, "The crucial words that this Kashmiri entity would function under the

parameters of the Indian Constitution are missing from this proposal. Our effort was to have a discussion on the subject of autonomy of Kashmir. As some of the members had objection to the autonomy, we decided to call it sovereignty but all this was under the Indian Constitution".

The proposal envisages that the portion State to be so reconstituted should be determined through an internationally-supervised ascertainment of the wishes of the Kashmiri people on either side of the Line of Control (LoC). This should be followed by an agreement among India, Pakistan and representatives of the Kashmiri people to move ahead with this formulation. The former Foreign Secretary said that time and again the Indian leadership from Narasimha Rao onwards has talked about giving autonomy to Kashmir. It is only methodology to start the negotiations.

The Kashmir Study Group has proposed that the sovereignty of the new entity would be guaranteed by New Delhi, Islamabad and appropriate international bodies. The entity under this scheme of things, would have its own secular democratic constitution, as well as its own citizenship, flag and a legislature, which would legislate on all matters other than defence and foreign affairs.

India and Pakistan would be responsible for the defence of the Kashmir entity, which on its own would maintain police and para-military forces for internal law and order purposes. The financial arrangements of the so-called Kashmiri entity would be worked out by the two countries and the so-constituted State would have a currency of its own.

The proposal says that Kashmiri citizenship would also entitle such citizens to acquire Indian or Pakistani passports depending on which side of the LoC they live on. Alternatively, they could use entity passport subject to endorsement by India and Pakistan as appropriate.

Stating that the proposal represents a practical framework that could satisfy the interests of the people of Kashmir, India and Pakistan, the formulation allows for this entity to have open borders with India and Pakistan thus permitting free transit of people, goods and services.

The proposal states that the LoC should remain in place until such time as both India and Pakistan decide to alter it in their mutual interests. However, it calls upon both the countries to demilitarise the area included in the Kashmir entity, except to the extent necessary to maintain logistic support for forces outside the State that could not otherwise be effectively supplied.

"Neither India nor Pakistan could place troops on the other side of the Line of Control without the permission of the other State," the paper recommends. According to the think tank, all displayed persons, including Kashmiri Pandits, who left any portion of the Kashmir entity, shall have the right to return to their homesteads.

Besides other dignitaries, I. K. Gujral, ex-Prime Minister, gave a dinner in honour of Kathwari in which top Indian and Kashmiri politicians joined. Does it suggest there is a tacit approval of authorities that be for such moves? I personally know that Narasimha Rao's concept of autonomy never spoke directly or indirectly of any compromise or sharing of sovereignty with any other country over J & K. Infact I spoke with mandate to many leading lights of Hurriyat Conference and leaders like Shabir Shah during that period on this issue. What does the present move then suggest needs explanation by the Central Government.

I subscribe to the opinion that misplaced optimism is as fatal as intransigence in such matters. But I strongly advocate a national debate on this proposal. That would also demonstrate whether S. K. Singh has mandate for this proposal from any political powers. Before getting carried away by an euphoria we must remember India's bottom line on Kashmir—that it is an indisputable and indispensable part of India. So from where does the question co-governing Kashmir arise? Secondly, U. S. should also know where the line for its involvement in this sensitive issue stops. I wonder why government is silent on this proposal. Because the basic concept of this paper contradicts the five decade old India's position on Kashmir.

To me this silence is befuddling. Or is it a silent approval? The nation deserves a right to know.

April, 1999

18

They have done it again! Yes our power hungry and blinkered politicians have thrust another election on already weary shoulders of the Nation. The game of musical chairs being played by all political parties in Delhi went haywire on 25th April when a reluctant and thoughtful President Mr. K. R. Narayanan decided that enough was enough. And he recommended the dissolution of that the 12^{th} Lok Sabha.

The script of the entire drama was authored by imperious and conveniently fastidious AIADMK Supremo Jayalalitha—the *Amma* of the entire crisis ! In a fit of rage she withdrew her support to the beleaguered A.B.Vajpayee Government, which paved way for latter's exit. When it came to formation of alternate government, the entire opposition was reduced to a cacophony of contrasting noises. Congress wanted to form a minority government and even had the support of a sizeable number of left and other parties.

But Samajwadi Party Chief Mulayam Singh Yadav pulled the rug under every body's feet by banging the drum for Jyoti Basu for the P. M.'s. post. This overture was spurned by Mr. Basu. At the same time abruptly the wind went out of Congress's sail, as Mulayam refused to budge from his stance. And finally Mrs. Sonia Gandhi signaled the end to this insipid and ludicrous drama of political match making by stating her unwillingness to form the government before the President. And it was curtains for 12th Lok Sabha as well as any other alternate government. Both BJP and the Congress which boasted about its numerical strength even on the

day of crucial vote in Lok Sabha and whose keenness for power was inadequately matched by parliamentary support have ended up on the losing side. Smaller parties like the AIADMK and the Samajwadi Party stand completely exposed for putting their selfish interest before the national interests while other bit players like RSP and Forward Block strained all their nerves to argue how revolutionary it was to have a Congress supported government than a Congress government. The contradictions inherent in the approaches of various political parties and their persistent refusal to bear in mind the larger good of the people stood in the way of forming a stable alternative government hence there is a willy-nilly acceptance of elections as a viable option. The President in a four page communique, noted that the ruling alliance had lost its majority because of a lack of cohesion in its ranks. And he also felt a similar lack of cohesion amongst the ranks of opposition. Hence he recommended fresh elections. In retrospect, President K. R. Narayanan's prolonged efforts to find a stable alternative government seemed to have been aimed at avoiding costly general elections so soon after the last one which itself had a life of only 18 months.

The aftershocks of political upheaval have started. Investors have paid dearly for the high drama in the country. Stock markets have lost an astounding Rs. 7,000 crore ($ 16 billion) in investors wealth between March 31 and April 24, Sensex at National Stock Exchange crashed by 161 point on 25th April. In political arena, Mulayam Singh's attempts to wear the halo of a *messiah* of Muslims have promoted just the opposite sentiments as is evident from several sharp reactions from leaders of Muslim Community. Mr. Nehaluddin, President of All India Muslim Forum has admitted that Mulayam's stubborn attitude on support to Congress can cost him dear at the hustings. Similar sentiments were also echoed by other Muslim leaders.

Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. M. S. Gill has stated that the current revision of electoral rolls would be over by 20th July. So this is enough indication that elections can only be conducted after that. But my heart goes out to all those officials and people who toil for days and nights at a stretch to facilitate the Herculean task of

conducting the elections. And what to speak of the voters, who brave bombs, bullets and weather to give a shape to political configurations. At least they deserve a better deal.

Coming back to J & K, it appears that Saifuddin Soz has nailed his own political coffin for all times to come. Well, unless of course, Congress agrees to take him under its wings, which is quite improbable at this juncture. The opportunistic posture taken by Saifuddin Soz and his subsequent gimmicry will not go down well with masses. One may have thousands of differences with National Congress supremo Dr. Farooq Abdullah, but in all fairness, he has lent a sustained and unstinted support to BJP Govt. at the centre. For Mr. Soz, it appears that horses have bolted from the stable. His only hope now is Mr. Mufti Mohammad Sayed, who represents Congress view point. Mr. Sayed is a principled man, and I have my own doubts whether he will welcome Mr. Soz into Congress, unless he is foisted upon by Central leadership.

Everybody is keen for return of Kashmiri Pandit Community into the Valley. I personally feel that as a token of good faith, Srinagar parliamentary seat in coming Lok Sabha elections should be offered to representative of Kashmiri Pandit Community by common consensus of all the political parties. This would re-establish the age-old bonds of communal harmony, tolerance, amity and solidarity with the feelings of this hurt community which was driven out in early nineties from the valley.

I conclude my column with an anguished heart. If only my political brethren would have risen above their narrow interests, at least the Nation would have been saved from the crushing burden of another election. A mammoth toll on national exchequer! My personal convictions aside, I strongly feel that merits and demerits of the government is a debatable matter. But once installed into power it should be allowed to last its full tenure. It should never be allowed to be enslaved by whims and fancies of few bloated egos. Defeating governments should cease to be the opportunistic exercise it has become in recent years. Both ruling and opposition parties have to realise that every issue need not be voted on party lines. The first requisite of coalition politics is the partial surrender

of the party agenda to accommodate a common programme of governance. The entire Nation would be grateful if our political prima-donnas realise this.

I have lost my friend and member of Editorial Board of *The Salook*, Mr. Sukhbir Chowdhry due to heart failure on 16th April 1999. He was humble and a gentle being. *The Salook* family will miss him badly.

I had promised to further write on Farooq Kathwari's Kashmir mission but could not do it in this issue. I shall continue it in further issues.

May, 1999

19

Caught napping ! Yes that is the befitting way to describe the Kargil Dras fiasco. Our entire top defence and army brass including Military Intelligence was taken completely unawares when nearly 600 heavily armed Pakistani mercenaries scouted up from nowhere on strategic heights of Kashmir's Kargil Batalik and Drass regions. Army was taken by complete surprise by this brazen incursion by Pak Army. The infiltrators had established observation posts, which were directing Artillery fire on Indian positions. Their plan was also to cut off Ladakh from Kashmir by occupying portions of Srinagar-Leh road and alter the LoC.

According to Defence sources, the Pakistani gameplan in Kargil was hatched in January this year, with infiltrators occupying areas that were vacated by Indian Army, as they become inaccessible during winter months. However, the Indian Army came to know about their presence when forward area ammunition dump in Kargil was blown and the first convoy to Leh on National Highway-1 Alpha came under artillery fire in the first week of May. The pattern of Pakistani fire revealed that shells were being directed to military targets by these infiltrators positioned on the ridge tops. It is understood that shelling was being directed through STD booths in the area. But what baffles the imagination is despite having intelligence information about infiltrators' presence, why no action was taken to pre-empt such eventually. What was Military Intelligence doing? Meanwhile true to its mettle, army recovered the lost ground, inflicting significant losses on enemy in the initial

stages. But the composition of terrain is such that infiltrators enjoyed considerable advantage over Indian army owing to their occupation of strategic heights. And they were backed by heavy shelling by Pakistan forces, which made their eviction even more difficult. By their continued presence inside Indian Territory and the shelling by Pakistan forces, which made their eviction even more difficult. By their continued presence inside Indian Territory these saboteurs aimed to give a psychological edge to Pakistan army over India. At the same time Indian Army was in a piquant situation. It had to hit back and that too with exemplary crippling intensity. For any such move air support was a must. But air attacks were purportedly fraught with many a danger including a full-scale war. But hats off to Vajpayee*ji* and his cabinet colleagues. In the hour of reckoning they did not let the nation down. They ordered airstrikes, a move, which required high degree with courage and fortitude. Soon IAF jets and helicopter gunships were pounding the living daylights on Pakistani stooges on slopes of Kargil. The first wave of airstrikes took place on Drass sub section of Kargil Batalik and Mushtoh sub sections to completely neutralize the concentration of 600 odd mercenaries. However, Pakistan in a bid to vitiate the atmosphere, shot down one MIG aircraft taking part in Kargil operations. It is learnt that the pilot of the ill fated aircraft had descended from his height in response to the distress call of his colleague whose plane had crashed after developing engine failure. During those moments Pakistani forces fired a surface to air missile at the Indian aircraft bringing it down. Significantly, IAF MIG was attacked in Indian airspace contrary to Pakistani claims that the jet was flying in Pakistani airspace. India on the other hand displayed tremendous restraint to this grave provocation. The more volatile being Pakistani assertions that they had the dead body of the crashed pilot who it is understood was shot dead on the ground.as well as the other airman whom they claim having captured, in their custody. Such highly provocative and diabolical acts of war mongering show Pakistan in its true colours. It remains to be seen how the international fraternity reacts to Pakistani outrage. But Pakistani as well as its cohorts in Kargil, must remember that those who live by gun, die by it. Good enough America came out openly saying that

India had not violated LoC and Russia thundered that it would block any move of Pakistan in U.N.O and Security Council to internationalise the Kashmir issue.

IAF plans to continue its campaign against insurgents till they are considerably decapitated and crippled. Prime Minister consulted and briefed all political parties of this move and rightfully they have supported this bold move. The whole nation in one voice is behind the Prime Minister. Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee has responded to this provocation in the language Pakistan understands best. Perhaps Pakistanis wanted to take advantage of political developments in India. And they proceeded to stir the hornet's nest with the wrong end of the stick. Indian response was more severe than their own expectations. At least now Pakistanis will quiver in their boots at the very thought of playing such games. Defence analysts believe that the intrusion along the Dras-Kargil-Vatakuj axis is aimed at engaging the Indian Army in a costly war of attrition to enhance the Pakistan's ante in future Indo-Pak talks on Siachin. During the talks on Siachin held in December, Pakistan had proposed the withdrawal of troops on both sides in the glacier, while India had called for an incremental approach that involved cease-fire along Actual Ground Position Line. Had they succeeded in their objective, the bargaining chip for Pakistanis, this time-it seems, would be intruders from Pakistan, pulling back from Kargil heights in exchange of Indian withdrawal from Siachin. Tehreek-e-Jehad, a militant group based in Muzaffarabad PoK, has claimed that a large number of its cadres had occupied strategic positions in Dras-Kargil Sector.

Going by these accounts, it is obvious that our military intelligence had erred. Perhaps they were hoodwinked by the rhetoric of bonhomie professed superficially by Pakistani leadership. Even in that case, Kargil is a cardinal lapse especially as far as our security and intelligence apparatus is concerned. More significantly irrespective of grand declarations, Kashmir is the core issue for all Pakistani politicians and leaders and will remain so. Pakistan's latest acts have made a travesty of Lahore Declaration. It appears now that Lahore detente was a clever ruse adopted by Pakistan to highlight its sham diplomatic magnanimity—while they were planning cross-border incursions into Indian Territory. This

can also be read as Pakistan's attempt to present Kashmir as a trigger, which could ignite a full-scale war. The policy towards Kashmir and continuance of insurgency through transborder operations are less under Nawaz Sharif's control and more in the hands of Army and ISI, which operate as a state within-a state. And they are hardly influenced by Lahore Declaration. For them as well as for whole of Pakistan, Kashmir is an obsession—a long cherished dream. Pray that our army intelligency wake up to this reality !

Kashmir, irrespective of all these happenings, continues to be a receptacle of ill conceived policies and apathy from the Government. Why does not the government realise that Kashmir needs equal respite from atrocities perpetrated by both men in khaki as well as militants. It has to be borne in mind that no solution to Kashmir is tenable without the return of Kashmiri Pandits. They are the essence of Kashmir. Without Kashmiri Pandits in the valley, it is just a case of Pakistan's writ ruling the roost in Kashmir, with Indian currency Indian standard time and Indian administration in force. Kashmiri Pandits, banished from their home land almost a decade ago are now in the prime stages of settling down elsewhere. So this is the right time to rehabilitate them back to their area. For this purpose Government should pull-out all the stops. Even if they have to be resettled in high security protected zones in Kashmir, it should be done.

At least Kashmir owes them this much. Or else, the entire talk of normalcy in Kashmir would be nothing short of hogwash.

June, 1999

20

Lahore bonhomie displayed by Pakistan would go down in history as one of the most glaring examples of political sleight of hand performed by it. It was a well orchestrated camouflage act aimed at concealing Pakistan's ulterior motive—To push its armed saboteurs namely Pakistan army regulars and their mercenary sidekicks into Kargil-Dras sector and insidiously usurp the Ladakh region from India. And by standards it was not a localised low intensity border skirmish as was being portrayed by Pakistan. Rather, it was an open and full, fledged act of war. Months of planning and preparation had gone into it. Every detail, right from logistics, backup, supply of ammunition etc. was worked out to perfection. Specific weapons like Stinger missiles, mortars, heavy calibre machine guns were utilised by the infiltrators in this operation. Therefore, it was not the usual infiltration, which Pakistan carries out every now and then in Kashmir. On the contrary, Pakistan sought to convert its military gains from Kargil into bargaining chips to gain leverage in Kashmir issue.

India reacted with a resolute determination to this mischief. It goes without saying that the entire nation now views Kargil standoff from only one perspective. As did the famous warrior Arjun in the epic Mahabharat, when his teacher Dronacharya asked him what he saw when he aimed his bow at a specific target. Arjun replied that he saw only that portion of the target which he wanted to hit with his arrow. The same way, the entire perceives Pakistan as the transgressor. There can never be a second opinion about that. The

whole nation stands by its gallant armed forces. There is a strong feeling amongst the masses that Pakistan should be shown its true place and pushed back behind LoC, once for all. We are all united in this endeavour. Political parties must bear in mind that this is not a programme of any single party. This is the overriding wish and desire of the entire nation and hence it is a national agenda. And as a nation we would achieve it. In the same spirit, I salute our lion-hearted liberators of Kargil. Daily we see scores of photographs of our jawans and officers, who laid down their lives while confronting the enemy in Kargil. What immediately catches the eye is the fact that most of these martyrs are in their early twenties and thirties. In their prime youth these young men set new parameters of bravery and selflessness which would act as guiding stones for our young generation.

While the nation idolises the martyrs; which is the most apt and befitting way of honouring them; but as they say, there is many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip, the same way this clamour of highlighting the heroics of our Kargil martyrs should be transferred into actions. Actions in the form of providing relief to their families and immediate release of ex-gratia payments to their kith and kin. The welfare and proper care of their families is the collective responsibility of the government and the society. So both should share it rather than shirking away from it after the din of war dies down. As happens quite often, these valiant soldiers must not be confined to *samadhis* and statues where the customary rituals like wreath laying are performed by a handful of people as a token of gratitude. On the contrary, they must remain eternally etched in our hearts. Why is it that we have so short and convenient memory that once the war is over we tend to forget our heroes? Is our patriotism a momentary phenomenon?

Well, that was all about the war. Now, lets come back to politics. Let us hope that elections are held in September. In so far as elections in Jammu & Kashmir are concerned, it is the time that all political parties, including the opposition, Hurriyat and JKDFP show their true secular credentials. Almost all of them vehemently swear by secularism and maintain that Kashmir's secularism is incomplete without Kashmiri Pandits.

But for all their lip service in this regard, they should peep into their conscience and see what they are doing for secularism.

If they really champion the true cause of secularism, then all such parties, by a common consensus must invite a Kashmiri Pandit to contest the elections from Srinagar Lok Sabha seat. Such a gesture would go a long way in washing away the bitterness of past from the hearts and minds of Kashmiri minorities. Or else the entire talk of secularism by all political parties in Kashmir, would be nothing but travesty of the secularism in the true sense.

Through this column, I wish to make an appeal to Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Mufti Mohammad Sayed, Abdul Ghani Lone, Shabir Ahmed Shah and Yasin Malik. This is the time for you gentlemen, to demonstrate your secular ethos and assuage the feelings of Kashmiri Pandits. Therefore, for God's sake don't miss this opportunity.

July, 1999

21

The final denouncement on Kargil fiasco has gone on predictable lines. A beleaguered Nawaz Sharif scurries to U.S.A. for a cosmetic surgery, ostensibly to correct a bleeding nose. A three hour long operation (read tongue lashing) is performed by President Clinton.

And a face saving surgery is successfully completed and a face saving formula is evolved. Proclaiming a Quixotic victory, hordes of cut throats of Pakistan Army and their Mujahideen hirelings are exhorted by their paymasters to come down from Kargil heights. A command, which they happily obeyed as their much touted motivation and high morale was already around their ankles—courtesy Indian Army.

Now that the guns of Kargil have fallen silent, it is time to take a look at Pakistani falsehood regarding LoC and the real motives behind the whole issue. Since the time hostilities broke out in Kargil, Pakistan has persistently sought to confound the issue of LoC with misleading statements. A ploy which eventually popped at their faces. As a matter of fact, LoC was never in dispute at the first phase. To nail Pakistani contention or sophistry about LoC here are some indubitable facts;

The representatives of Chief of Army Staff of India and Pakistan held a series of meetings alternately at Suchetgarh, on Indian side and Wagah checkpost, on the Pakistani side, to delineate the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir resulting from cease-fire of 17th December, 1971 in accordance with paragraph 4 (ii) of the

Shimla Agreement signed between Government of India and Government of Pakistan on 2nd July, 1972.

Indian delegation which was led by Lt. Gen. P. S. Bhagat, PVSM, VC comprised Maj. Gen. M.R. Rajwade, VSM, MC, Maj. Gen. I.S. Gill, PVSM, MC, Col. S.M. Sahm, Lt. Col. Chahal, VSM, Lt. Col. D.M. Tewan. Similar six member Pakistan Army delegation was headed by Lt. Gen. Abdul Hameed Khan, S, Pk. SQA. Other members of this delegation were, Brig. S.M. Abbasi, Col. Mahmud Shaukat, Col. Sayed Refaqat, TQA, Lt. Col. M.M. Afzal Khan, Lt. Col. Ahmed Sayed. The Line of Control was reproduced on two sets of maps prepared by each side.

Each set consisted of 27 map sheets formed into 19 mosaics. Each individual mosaic of all four sets of maps with the Line of Control marked on them has been signed by the representatives of the Chief of Army Staff of India and Pakistan. Each side had exchanged one set of signed mosaic as required under the joint statement by representatives of Government of India and Pakistan signed at Delhi on 29th August, 1972.

Despite Pakistan's tireless efforts to smudge the truth the reality of LoC is beyond any modicum of doubt. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz and Information Minister Mushaid Hussain together did a major song and dance about LoC which according to them was not delineated. But the facts were diametrically opposite to their claims. A Pakistani map, published under the direction of Maj. Gen. Anis Ali Syed SI (M), Surveyor General of Pakistan, with the Line of Control duly printed was recovered from one of the recaptured positions in Kargil Sector. Likewise, a satellite imagery of Kargil-Dras-Batalik Sector taken during October, 1998, reveals that there was no military activity in the areas of intrusion. Air photographs of the area also highlight the regular posts on both the sides of Line of Control, thus substantiating the fact that the troops on ground were aware of alignment of LoC. Interestingly, in the last 27 years, Pakistan has never disputed the delineation jointly ratified by the two representatives of the Chief of Army Staff of India and Pakistan. Therefore, it goes without saying that this is a deliberate attempt to mislead and cover up the armed intrusions across the Line

of Control by Pakistani Army. A thorough perusal of Paragraph 4 (ii) of Shimla Agreement clearly vindicates India's position on LoC.

"In Jammu and Kashmir, the Line of Control resulting from cease-fire of December 17, 1971 shall be respected by both sides without prejudice to the recognised position of either side. Neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations. Both sides further undertake to refrain from the threat or the use offered in the violation of this Line". Probably that says it all, laying bare Pakistani's stark malevolence towards Indian territories.

On the diplomatic front Pakistan Government resorted to circumlocution and obfuscation to further its case. As directed by the Pak CO AS, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan Sartaj Aziz spoke in different languages without any coherency. Pak stand on Kargil shifted with the alacrity of a pendulum. Try sampling this. "LoC is delineated but not demarcated." "Pak Army has been occupying these heights for a long time." "The intrusion of LoC is not by Pak Army but by militants who are not suborned by Pak Army." "Pak Army is fighting in Drass and Kargil Sectors". These outbursts made by Pak Ministers made them akin to frogs in lillypond constantly jumping from one stance to another. However, these were most brazen attempts towards obfuscation. This line while not marked on the ground is clearly identified by both the armies and has remained so for the last 27 years. These statements are consistent in their contradictions. Bodies of Pak soldiers with identification papers bring out the lie squarely. The LoC is as clearly marked on Pakistani maps as it is on Indian ones. On the hindsight, it appears that Pakistan got carried away by grand delusions of its new found zealotry and inflated military prowess, which all the top Pakistan brass was wearing on its nose ever since their atomic explosions. By now, all the brilliant masterminds of Kargil plan in Pak Army might be wondering what actually hit them? For it seems they had not reckoned the battle preparedness and versatility of Indian Armed Forces. So the Kargil misadventure will haunt them forever.

August, 1999

22

Along with rest of the country, J & K is also going to the polls to elect its members to 14th Lok Sabha. Parochial and disruptive elements to hide their chagrin, would like the people not to participate in the elections by way of calling to boycott or alternatively creating psychological panic of attack by militant outfits in case of their participation. One expects Kashmiris to come forward and cast their vote in favour of their candidates.

My optimism stems from the bold stand taken by Mufti Mohammed Sayed who has recently launched his Democratic Peoples Party with slogan of dialogue with the people of J & K in order to find an everlasting solution to Kashmir imbroglio. It appears, voice raised by Mufti has gone well with local sentiments who are, honestly speaking, very much tired of being sandwiched between two guns i.e. militants and *sarkari*. One of the main grouses of Kashmiris has been that almost magically, on reopening the ballot boxes in counting centres a mysterious change takes place. The ones people want do not find place in the list of the winners. That is how over a period of time the Kashmiris started losing their faith, confidence and trust in electoral system. He wanted to be ruled by different set of politicians but finds himself still chained under different set of rulers.

This doubt of Ballot box magic has to go once for all from the minds of people which itself would be one of the biggest solutions to Kashmir problem. The platform chosen by Mufti Mohammad Sayed should not be sabotaged or scattered by any manoeuvring,

politicking or hiring of men and material which has been so far common in Kashmir context. The worst sufferers of any such move will not be Mufti Mohammad Sayed or his associates; but the people who are desperately and honestly trying to see peace, tranquillity and mutual trust return back to the Valley.

All over these years the interested parties in Kashmir have tried to vitiate the fragile atmosphere of Kashmir, by propounding at times, preposterous theories as solutions to the Kashmir issue. The ramifications of which portended to be quite contrary to their objective; which was quite understandable as the motives behind all such moves had their moot points in different destinations on the globe. Having said that, it was obvious that their influencing factors were different as were their purveyors. Some sought to appease their vote banks, few saw this as short cut to fame whereas others wanted to play super peace brokers. Equally ardent were the ones who wanted to queer the pitch for any solution like Farooq Abdullah who, reports suggest, even may reach any compromise with surrendered militants to use them as convenient weapons to harass the opponents fighting his party during the current elections. In such a scenario came the peacenik Farooq Kathwari with his recipe for instant solution to Kashmir problem — the study report on Kashmir "The Kashmir Dispute at Fifty Charting Paths to Peace." Mr. Kathwari's Kashmir Study Group had strings running to important global centres of power including White House, Islamabad and elsewhere. One cursory glance at its contents was enough to determine the veracity as well as credentials of the report. It contained the same old sermons about the Kashmir which were voiced time and again by the self styled crusaders who had arrogated themselves to the task of playing arbitrators in Kashmir much to the glee of Pakistan. Therefore, they read from the same hackneyed script doctored to suit neither the people of Kashmir nor India. The study report has, if not anything, a fair degree of mischief potential. Not to mention an overt and flagrant tilt towards Pakistan right from the word go. In fact some of the proposals are quite perplexing and absurd as they are drafted to give Pakistan an indispensable status in Kashmir talks. Therefore, it is imperative to elucidate them in their exact form.

The report suggests trying out designs of co-sovereignty and confederalism or other power sharing arrangements as have sometimes been proposed for Kashmir. In simple terminology it implies that Kashmir should, as per this report, be governed jointly by India and Pakistan. Now, isn't that a real bloomer? Nowhere in this report has Pakistan been condemned for its subversive role in Kashmir. Equally startling is absence of any form of deploration of ethnic cleansing carried out in the valley at Pakistan's behest. On contrary, Pakistan is fully exonerated from its sinister role in Kashmir violence, as is evident from these lines - "The team lays claim to no knowledge that covert cross border activities are currently underway or are being advocated." Mind you this is not a casual oversight but a well calculated exercise aimed at safeguarding Pakistani interests. Similarly, out of the entire polity of Jammu and Kashmir, it is *Hurriyat* which is the apple of Kashmir Study Group's eyes. *Hurriyat* finds an extensive mention in the report to the extent that it strongly advocates Hurriyat participation in all talks. Going by *Hurriyat's* blatant pro Pakistan leanings and its anachronistic perceptions about Kashmir it is nothing short of wishful thinking that any conclusive outcome can emerge out of any dialogue with them. Speaking about *Hurriyet*, I chanced upon their White Paper on elections in Kashmir, which made interesting reading.' *Hurriyat*, it seems is caught up in a time-warp. At least, this is the impression one gains from their outlook towards Kashmir. And then they have their facts wrong in so far as the history of Kashmir is concerned. According to them, Kashmir became independent by default. They find no fault with Indian Independence Act yet when Maharaja of Kashmir exercises the powers of this act they see a conspiracy in this. For them the hordes of Pakistani tribals who descended on Kashmir are heroes and Indian troops who saved the Kashmiris from Pakistani marauders are invaders. They look for Hindu and Muslim in every Kashmiri. They do not have tears when their comrades-in-arms butcher innocent minorities subjecting them to rape and plunder. But if a terrorist whether foreign or local is killed, *Hurriyat* leaders are at the forefront of funeral processions beating their chest and cursing the security forces. In their eyes, all acts of terrorism are committed by

Indian army because the militants are saints and their fight a holy war—*jehad*.

I can say with certainty that Kashmiri people have become wiser to the likes of *Hurriyat* because Kashmiris know that the grandiose garden path of *Azadi* envisioned by *Hurriyat* leads to Islamabad. The Valley will never forgive these leaders for using and abusing the sentiments of its inhabitants.

September, 1999

23

A.G. Lone, my one time senior colleague in politics and a proven friend of decades has returned from USA after treatment of his heart ailment. Now as a senior Hurriyat Leader and a key player of its politics, he is meeting various sections of public opinion in Delhi. I had a meeting with him recently in Delhi and exchanged views. I thought it best to address an open letter to him so that the readers could also comprehend the Kashmir issue in its totality.

Dear and Respected Lone Sahib,

Mention of your name evokes nostalgic memories of the same A. G. Lone in whose association under the banner of Kashmir Study Circle, we successfully ventured out to bring back the estranged youngmen to the national mainstream, who had strayed off from it in the period between 1967 to 1971. Those were your Congress days when you were a minister in the Cabinet of Sadiq *Saheb* and subsequently Syed Mir Qasim. Your ideology in that period was steeped in the colours of national unity and Congress. Then came the stage when you joined opposition and your perspectives towards sufferings and rights of Kashmiri people became more rigid with passage of time. I am well aware of gross injustices inflicted on you when you contested elections where the results were purposefully declared against you. Later, you braved several attempts on your life. Philosophically speaking, perhaps time will tell whether a seasoned political personality like you was right in deviating from the chosen path. Despite your trials and tribulations, one never saw

shades of sentimentalism and communalism in your entire demeanour and thoughts. I can proudly vouch for this. I personally know your contributions towards your fellow Kashmiri Pandits from your area who migrated to other parts of the country in 1990. Your heart always bled for them and their sufferings. It was your helplessness at the turn of events after you left Congress and the way your People's Party was not allowed to function that drove you finally towards *Hurriyat*. You played a pivotal part in *Hurriyat's* role against the atrocities perpetrated in Kashmir and elsewhere in the state. To that extent your role and your stance was fair, just and correct. Nobody can deny that. But somewhere down the line, people always felt that you were meant for a bigger and crucial role in the affairs of state. They are absolutely right in their own assessment of your stature which they feel is underutilized in the context of Kashmir. We are about to enter another century. This probably is more predominant reason why people like you should consider it your responsibility to provide succour to the beleaguered and bruised psyche of Kashmir. Bear in mind, you must not aggavate it. Give them the healing touch they want. Within the *Hurriyat*, there are moderates like Omar Farooq and many others. Time has come where there is dire need of self introspection within the *Hurriyat* conglomerate. Pakistan's childish misadventure in Kargil has proved beyond any doubt, the determination of the Indian nation and Government to preserve the solidarity, integrity and unity of the country. Irrespective of political differences, everybody was for throwing out Pakistan Army and so-called *Mujahadeens* out of the Kargil soil and it was achieved. In the background of this scenario, your rigid and die hard attitude for solution to Kashmir imbroglio needs a review and realistic approach. You should not commit mistake after mistake. You gave call for boycott of polls and it did help only Farooq Abdullah who used this opportunity to engineer victory for his candidates in recently held Lok Sabha elections. In fact, many suspect that a tacit understanding between Hurriyat and National Conference has developed to put NC candidates on a winning wicket

I personally do not believe this although it appears so. It is the poor Kashmiri who continues to suffer between the two guns right

from 1990. This is simply and purely because of indecisive and rigid attitude where *Hurriyat* does not want to face the realities of the situation.

Our Ex-Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao was one who wanted to sit across the table with you and go to any extent of autonomy within the Indian state. And probably that was the best offer you got and unfortunately missed. To quote Mr. Rao. "Sky was the limit for the extent of autonomy that could be considered." You should understand that history will not forgive if you still remain prisoner of indecision and do not come on the negotiating table with the authorities in power so that the atrocities and excesses to which Kashmiri people have became accustomed, could be stopped once for all.

The tragedy lies in the fact that for our problem, we think outsiders can be mediators and bail us out of this difficult situation. It is a problem between people of Kashmir and the state and no outsider has a right to interfere in our internal matters or to give us solutions which directly or indirectly would lead to fragmentation of J&K state. People from outside the state and country may be receptive and sympathetic to the problem but in absence of knowing the ground realities they can not offer a solution.

Nearly two lakh Kashmiri Pandits are scattered in other parts of the country, uprooted from their motherland. They are in a worst kind of crisis. This exile is weaning them away from the moorings of their traditional culture and heritage. They stand to lose their societal roots which had bound them to their legacy. Government both at national as well as the state level are doing a superfluous lip service to the whole issue of bringing back the Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley. But for all their bravado on this count, the stark reality remains the same—the governments have done nothing for the cause of Pandits.

It is people like you who should ensure their return and rehabilitation in the Valley. Their homes and their lands are to be returned to them. No solution is possible to Kashmir imbroglio without taking them into confidence. They are party to every issue pertaining to Kashmir.

State coffers are being plundered by a coterie of selected individuals right down to the last penny. There is nothing but abject poverty and utter deprivation in the entire Kashmir valley. In such a murky scenario, I have full faith that people like you and Omar Farooq in *Hurriyat* can show a new direction in the Valley.

There is no doubt that you can also influence the minds of personalities like Yasin Malik and Syed Ali Geelani who are considered to be hard-liners and are equally vital for Kashmir. You with your sagacity can dispel all the misgivings from their minds so that they can see reason. Lone *saheb*, the onus now squarely lies on you to shut out the corrupt and inept government at the state and provide relief to the people. Please do not look at the things through tinted glass which shows only one colour the colour of futility.

Time has come when you should come forward for a purposeful dialogue with the Government of India. You have stature and status where all the communities can repose trust in you during your dialogue and negotiations.

I hope that in the event of such purposeful dialogue, you will gain maximum autonomy within the constitution of this country.

Lone *saheb*, time has come for us to reach out to our inner frontiers and usher a new dawn of hope.

Thanks.

December, 1999

24

Last two months have seen spurt of militant activity in J & K state. Added feature of suicide squads in the ranks of militants has accelerated the tempo of violence in the valley. The prime targets of said squads are army, members of paramilitary forces and police. These suicide squad members are basically non-Kashmiris who are indoctrinated in fanatic religious jingoism that if they are killed they would become martyrs and go straight to heaven and in case they succeed they are *Ghazis* (victors). Kashmiri militants, it seems, are not enthused by the idea of such martyrdom that is why their numbers remain far and few in suicide squads. What remains to be seen is how these squads would be able to fulfil their objectives.

One thing is amply clear that the local population is not openly with these militants. Because they do not want to take any risk which could exacerbate the matters further. Ironically, these are the same people who had successfully rebuffed the Pakistan when it had sent armed infiltrators into Kashmir in 1965.

The local population at that time played an instrumental role by joining hands with security forces to nail the entire lot of Pak infiltrators. So what is the reason that today Kashmiri is not inclined to take the same risk he took in 1965? He remains a passive spectator now and does not want to be caught between the guns of Army and militants. In 1965, it was the sheer will and determination of Kashmiri masses that made the then martial law dictator of Pakistan, Late General Ayub Khan wrung his hands in despair and

said, "Kashmiri people are not trustworthy." That perhaps was the biggest tribute to the resolve of Kashmiris.

On the other hand, today the irony is that every second person regards himself as an expert on Kashmir and he advances one or the other theory to end the Kashmir problem. Here, one basic thing is to be borne in mind. No militancy can survive in the face of overwhelming popular desire for peace. The plain truth is, Kashmiris today are an embittered and helpless lot. Human memory starts fading after a period of time. But historians seldom fail and hence they never allow events and facts from past to go unnoticed.

Rather they bring them into focus. The same goes for the credentials of Kashmiri Muslims, which are being questioned every now and then.

The magnanimity and secular traits of Kashmiri Muslims are reflected in *Tonga Wallah* incident of 1947.

Maharani Sahiba of Kashmir (Dr. Karan Singh's mother) decided to leave the valley at the height of conflict between India and Pakistani armed invaders. In the October of 1947 she left Srinagar in a caravan of *tongas* carrying her personal belongings including her precious objects like jewellery and other valuables. As soon as her entourage reached Nagrota, a place eight kilometres before Jammu, she ordered the slaughter of all *tonga wallahs* who were all Muslims. Their dead bodies were later sent to Srinagar. The normal reaction to such an outrage should have been massacre of minority Hindu community in retribution. But the Muslim leadership as well as Muslim community of Kashmir at that time chose to overlook the incident. This is Kashmiri character. One is compelled to fathom the reasons why the same community is silent over the killings and looting carried out by the militants. Not the least that they support these militants.

Now the question arises: did the Kashmiri see the same face of freedom as seen by others in different parts of country in the whole period between 1947 till date? There is no doubt that Kashmir has prospered economically. But at every turn of life, the picture of India as perceived from the eyes of a Kashmiri, was not encouraging. Unfortunately, the Sheikh Abdullah, after his arrest in

1953 could not give Kashmiris the right direction and fed them with ideas of uncertainty and dispute about the future of Kashmir. By the time Late Sheikh Abdullah realised his mistake and entered into fresh agreement with the Prime Minister, late Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the damage was already done because of confusion. Late Sheikh Abdullah joined back the mainstream politics and became the Chief Minister but he could not dispel the confusion from the minds of Kashmiri people.

Kashmiri people could not have free and fair elections with sole exception in 1977 during the regime of late Morarji Desai. Otherwise, it has been the same old story of rigged elections and manipulated results in so far as Kashmir is concerned. The biggest losers in this electoral sham were the masses; who never got the opportunity to send their true representatives to Lok Sabha as well as legislative assembly. For the commoner in Kashmir, hardships are the order of the day. He has to toil hard for everything. Whether it is a job in government, a seat in medical college or a seat in any other technical college; he pays for it. After receiving the raw end of bargain for so long, he has developed a slave psyche. The need of the hour is to involve him emotionally and mentally to make him feel his importance, where he feels quite confident of taking his own decisions.

In this context, Mufti Mohammad Sayed, President of People's Democratic Party (PDF) is the only leader from Kashmir who talks in the same language. Mufti *Saheb* has persistently advised the centre to shed its unidirectional perspectives towards Kashmir. An advice which has fallen on deaf ears so far. The government continues to reap the harvest of its previous blunders. Mufti *Saheb* regards it as a prerequisite to any solution that first and foremost the wounded self esteem of Kashmiri people should be properly assuaged. Nothing can be achieved if self confidence is not there in masses. Mufti Mohammad Sayed was the first leader to realise the importance of unconditional dialogue between Government of India and Kashmiri people. My appeal is to all who matter to kindly have direct talks with the masses in Kashmir. Modalities can be discussed and the whole world will see the militancy dying its natural death.

February, 2000

25

Snow is melting in the beautiful valley of Kashmir and early spring has set in.

The government and its various agencies are no doubt working overtime to project tourist conducive and 'all is fine' scenario. It is seldom that government is wrong but I want to share with you the details of happy and normal situation in the state and the safety measures that our "highly responsible" government is taking for the general welfare of the people.

Officials claim : Militancy has been curbed and security forces are in full command of the situation. Intelligence agencies are doing a splendid job. Interests of the nation are safe in Farooq Abdullah's hands. For all intent and purposes things were going quite normal in the month of February 2000 with some minor aberrations as we are made to believe. The chronology of such sole aberrations goes as under:

- **Feb. 2nd** Huge cache of arms and ammunition including 40 rocket launchers recovered from Poonch and Doda.
- **Feb. 4th** Ten people including a National Conference leader were killed and three wounded in separate incidents in the Valley.
- **Feb. 5th** Two persons were killed and five injured as four powerful explosions rocked Idgah locality in Srinagar within a span of six hours. Elsewhere in the valley nine people including three militants, three securitymen and two

counter insurgents, were killed and six wounded in separate incidents.

- **Feb. 6th** Three Kashmiri Pandits including an 8 year old girl were killed and one critically wounded in an attack in Telvani village, 65 km south of Srinagar.
- **Feb. 10th** Three people were killed and two seriously injured as militants triggered off powerful explosions and exchanged fire with security forces in Tral township of south Kashmir. Elsewhere in the state seven people including five militants and a security jawan were killed.
- **Feb. 11th** At least three persons were killed and three wounded when a powerful bomb exploded in Calcutta bound Sealdah Express near Vijaypur, about 30 kms south of Jammu.
- **Feb. 11th** A father and his two daughters, all of them Special Police Officers and two children were among seven persons killed in Kashmir.
- **Feb. 12th** At least three persons were killed and over twenty wounded when a powerful bomb rocked a makeshift vegetable market in Jammu.
- **Feb. 15th** Jammu observed bandh on 14th February on the call of BJP to protest the deaths in the two separate bomb blasts which claimed over ten lives.
- **Feb. 17th** Self styled local commander of *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* Abu Talha was killed in an encounter with BSF at Pathshahi Chowk in Chhanpora area. Deputy commandant J.S. Pathania, who led BSF team, died after sustaining bullet injury.
- **Feb. 25th** Eleven people including four Pakistani intruders, five militants and a Border Security Force officer were killed in the Valley in separate incidents of violence.
- **Feb. 28th** A ruling National Conference Block president Abdul Ghani Lone escaped a bid on his life by militants, while five people including three securitymen were killed

and an equal number wounded in separate incidents in Jammu and Kashmir.

- **Feb. 29th** Heavily armed group of foreign mercenaries attacked two houses at Harni village in Mendhar tehsil of Poonch district and shot dead four people who were all Hindus including three women and critically injured another. Elsewhere, ten people including two armymen were killed in militancy related incidents in Jammu division. Twenty four hours later five persons belonging to Hindu community again were killed by a group of militants at Wanpoh on Jammu-Srinagar highway.

You can imagine how efficient and responsible our government is which is not leaving anything to chance. Farooq Abdullah is a committed nationalist but wants to trifurcate the state and make the Valley 'autonomous' if not independent. His party, National Conference, continues to be a coalition partner of the ruling alliance at the Centre. They vibe well on all other issues but when it comes to autonomy National Conference seems to be at loggerheads with its coalition buddy at the Centre. Strange bedfellows, is not it ! NC is not shy of pulling the velvet off the gloves by hinting something on the lines of Soviet Union disintegration if their brand of autonomy is denied to them. Thunders Iftikhar Hussain Ansari; "Mark my words, if there is no flexibility, the country could face disintegration like the Soviet Union." Not to be outdone BJP raises the heckles of autonomy protagonists to stratosphere by having a tilt at the autonomy windmills. First salvo is fired by none other than senior BJP leader, K.R. Malkani, "What is the justification of special status for J & K, he queries. In the same breath he touches the raw nerve of Farooq Abdullah, "How could the new autonomy proposal be accepted when Farooq Government has not been able to deliver justice to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh," Mr. Malkani wonders. But be assured everything will be all right. It is only the momentary bravado which has clouded the discretion of both the parties namely NC and BJP and thus the polemics.

Kashmiri Pandits, for some inexplicable reasons, it seems do not merit a place in Farooq Abdullah's scheme of things or

priorities, to be blunt. Dr. Abdullah considers them to be inhabitants of Jurassic era. So much so, that he blissfully forgot the tall promises or dare I say electoral ramblings he made about how he missed them and yearned for their return. National Human Rights Commission put the things in right perspective when it lambasted J & K government for its perjury regarding the Pandits. A three member bench of NHRC expressed its ire over the conduct of a special committee set up by J & K government at NHRC's directives to tackle the migrants' problems. "The manner in which the committee is carrying out the work to formulate the policies and principles in respect of the migrants, gives the impression that serious attention is not being paid by the authorities concerned in this regard, observed the Commission while hearing a petition.

These are very small things that are happening otherwise everything is fine in the Valley—"*Sab Khariyat Hai*" In World War II parlance similar situation was aptly described by a word, 'snafu' which was abbreviated form of the expression—*Situation normal but all fouled up*. No pun is intended but truth is always bitter.

March, 2000

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The Frankenstein of our myopic and blinkered approach towards Kashmir reared its head at Chittisinghpora in Kashmir where thirty five unarmed and innocent Sikhs were butchered by a band of Pakistani inspired cut-throats who were out to display their brand of virility to the visiting US President. Thus the bottom was knocked off from the tall claims of normalcy made by the state as well as the Central Government. The grim reality of the situation was borne out by an ironic incident when Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah, Minister for Urban Development in J & K government visited the site of carnage. A group of agitated Sikhs told him in plain terms, "You rigged the elections in 1987 and that turned them (Muslim youths) to the gun." In 1987 assembly elections, Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah warded off a tough challenge from Mohammad Yousuf Shah alias Salahuddin of Muslim United Front who now heads *Hizbul Mujahadeen*. So much for the politics of rigging.

The ultras numbering seventeen approximately, belonged to *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* and *Hizbul Mujahadeen* outfits both of which have their roots in Pakistan. The arrest of Mohammad Yakoob Wagey, their local contact man enabled the security forces to hunt down and kill some of the culprits involved in the massacre. Most of the slain militants belonged to Pakistan. Do we need any further proof? The massacre and its incumbent ramifications have already started appearing. Sikhs in the valley have started to think the unthinkable i.e. migrating from the valley. The cascading effects of

this carnage become more apparent when one takes stock of the 500 odd Kashmiri Muslim families who have already shifted to the valley from adjoining states fearing reprisals. This is besides thousands of Kashmiri Pandit families who left the valley and migrated to other parts of the country and Jammu.

The attacks were clearly meant to inform visiting US President Bill Clinton that terrorists from across the border are unfazed by any gestures of friendship that the US may wish to make to this country. They wanted to convey in unmistakable terms that a recourse to violence on their part is very much on the cards, no matter what any force on earth may feel about the importance of seeking a peaceful resolution to old hatreds. It also underlines the fact that the forces of terrorism, far from declining, are growing from strength to strength. The significance of the latest attack was the deliberate singling out of Sikhs at the Chittisinghpora village. This community, which has had historic and geographic ties with Jammu & Kashmir, has thus far been spared the mindless violence that the state has witnessed. The massacre has also scotched the illusions that Pakistan was sympathetic to Sikhs as was the impression deduced from its overt support to Sikh extremists.

For the past six months, the government had been battling pressure to restart dialogue with Pakistan even though its new ruler Gen. Pervez Musharraf refused to endorse the Washington Agreement of July 4, 1999. It was this agreement, that Pakistan agreed to maintain the sanctity of the LoC in exchange for Clinton's good offices in helping resolve the Kashmir issue. From the tenor of Clinton's statement after killings, it was clear that he intended to make general remarks. But the barbaric act in Anantnag changed things. His expression of outrage and his calls to "respect the LoC" seemed to be an addendum to the statement. U.S 's growing ties with India are mainly based on commercial interests than any political interest.

However, Clinton's call for respect of LoC did not go well with All Party *Hurriyat* Conference leadership. A distraught A.G. Lone could not hide his chagrin. He felt that President Clinton was out to please his hosts in order to drum up commercial ties between India

and US at the cost of ignoring the likes of *Hurriyat*. APHC demanded an independent inquiry into the incident. The inquiry team should comprise Amnesty International, Asia Watch, NHRC and the most unlikliest Pakistan's Human Rights Commission. Now isn't that height of absurdity?

My mind goes back ten years when the Pandits started their exodus from the valley in the face of meticulous extermination drive launched from across the border. At that time many of our esteemed leaders and their ilk termed that migration as 'overreaction'. That "overreaction" now stands rationalised. Mere presence of security forces and army in the streets with tricolour fluttering atop every building in the Valley is not enough to establish Indian sovereignty over Kashmir. We also need to have the entire spectrum of masses back in the Valley. Only then would any talk of normalcy or return of normalcy hold water. Otherwise these things remain nothing but a nostalgic's dream. For Farooq Abdullah the killings are an aberration. Or else things are fine in the Valley. I never espouse hawkish stance but what right he has to stay in power? Whom is he fooling by indulging in this kind of circumlocution. To set the matters straight here are some statistics:

In Kashmir over 29,000 civilians and 5,000 security personnel have been killed, more than 2,78,000 people rendered homeless and there has been damage of over Rs 2000 crore to property. In view of violence, the Centre has been forced to spend crores on counter-insurgency operations and over Rs 46,000 crores on expenditure on Army and paramilitary forces. These statistics, to my mind are potent enough to trigger full scale war and here he is; sweeping them under the carpet as trivial trash.

On one hand we are shouting to heavens that Kashmir is an integral part of India. On the other hand our top leaders and bureaucrats are hobnobbing with people like Farooq Kathwari whose separatist credentials are well known. We deserve an answer Vajpayee*ji*.

Our Prime Minister being an excellent statesman and a seasoned politician is more keen to earn maximum accolades especially when he is playing to the Western gallery. Mr Prime

Minister, patriotism and one-upmanship never go hand in hand. President Clinton, when he visited the country, had everyone bowing and scrapping before him. We must not forget that Americans have never changed their perspectives on Kashmir which are inimical to Indian interests. It is only that they have altered them a bit cosmetically to send us in raptures. If scratched, the American policies on Kashmir remain the same. Our intelligence agencies owe an explanation to the nation. Why they did not had the forewarning of this massacre and why they were caught napping? In case they had an inkling of this carnage, why the Government of India failed to take immediate preventive measures?

Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, himself admitted that he never perceived this kind of massacre of Sikhs which clearly indicates that he was caught off guard. That being the case, he has no right whatsover to remain in the office. Government of India and Prime Minister Vajpayee should take note of this fact that if people from only one faith remain in the Valley and members of all other faiths are driven out under threats, persecution, duress and coercion, it is good bye to concept of secularism and farewell to the very basis of what makes Kashmir an integral part of India.

April, 2000

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Kashmir continues to wallow in the murky waters of governments apathy. Lawlessness, nepotism blatant callousness and brazen plagiarising of government money have become new mascots of ruling party in J & K. But all is not lost. There is some silver lining in this otherwise gloomy scenario. The voice which boldly and unflinchingly articulates the true sentiments, aspirations and under pinings of masses is becoming loud and clear day by day. It is the voice of former Union Home Minister and People's Democratic Party President Mufti Mohammad Sayed, the harbinger of new hope for the beleaguered people of the Valley.

PDP President M.M. Sayed has submitted a memorandum to the Governor on culmination of a massive protest rally at Jammu on 20th April. This memorandum reflects the true sentiments of the people of J & K. I thought it best to share the contents of the memorandum with my readers. They are as follows:

"The belated breast-beating by the Central and State governments over the most gruesome, inhuman and tragic massacre at Chittisinghpora and subsequent killings in Anantnag in fake encounter betrays the hypocritical attitudes towards the grave state of affairs in Jammu and Kashmir. On the one hand, the two governments have been guilty of utter callousness towards protecting the lives and property of innocent people in the troubled State and on the other hand, they keep harping on so-called "return of normalcy." Worse still, they also claim "credit" for what they trumpet as their "achievement". The excesses committed on

innocent citizens and violation of human rights have further alienated the people.

The only obvious conclusion is that either the governments in Delhi and Srinagar are ignorant of the ground realities or they are trying to hoodwink the people. In either case they stand to blame for the immense consequences of their unpardonable callousness.

There can be no two opinions about the foremost need for strong condemnation of such gruesome and inhuman acts. Massacre of this grave dimension is bound to result in further aggravation of the situation in Kashmir, inspite of the parrot-like assertion by the Government that its so-called "pro-active policy" to control the situation was paying dividends. All such claims stand exposed in the face of unabated violence and consequent miseries.

Where this gruesome killing has direct bearing on the security failure of State and the Central Governments. People's Democratic Party has always been showing concern over the day to day killings of innocent people all over the state. And it has been advocating that the bloodshed has to be stopped. This objective cannot be achieved unless the problem is addressed politically.

The judicial probes into such incidents fail to serve the purpose and their reports never see the light of the day, not to speak of identifying and punishing the culprits.

The Government's obsession with its military approach, couched as its "Pro-active policy", is spelling all-round disaster. Precious human lives are being lost and the situation is sliding from bad to worse. This narrow-minded approach is bound to prove counter productive as indeed it has till now.

Dialogue with all sections of the local population including those whose position may be diametrically opposed to that of the ruling establishment, is the need of the hour. To facilitate this course of action, it is necessary to immediately set free all political detenues and take other confidence building measures.

It is a strange phenomenon to say the least, that the Government of India falls head over heels to enter into dialogue with insurgents in the North-East, in far away land, but stubbornly refuses to do so

in case of Kashmir. This duplicity smacks of double standards. Sectarianism of one kind can never be fought with sectarianism of other kind.

It is the considered opinion of the People's Democratic Party (PDF) that the Centre must realize that its policy of bullet for bullet is inherently flawed and hence inevitably doomed to fail. It must, realize that Kashmir problem is basically not a foreign inspired militancy and its solution does not lie in overpowering by excessive use of force.

It must realize that militancy is an offshoot of the problem and not its real genesis, which lies in the ever deepening sense of betrayal and alienation.

Thus the PDP stresses an urgent and compelling need for the Central Government to objectively re-apprise its current strategy and formulate and implement with sincerity and deliberate speed, a farsighted responsible, realistic and rational policy viz-a-viz Kashmir. It must aim at conflict resolution through dialogue, healing touch and accommodation. It should also humanize the approach of the security and police forces and should appreciate our concern for a need to exercise restraint in the use of offence.

New Delhi must realize that excessive and brutal use of force, denial of justice, harassment and persecution of innocent civilians and undermining true and genuine democratic process will only deepen the sense of alienation. The Government must immediately release all political leaders who have been languishing in jails within and outside the state for years together without any trial. It must prosecute and punish those who are guilty of crimes of custodial killings, fake encounters, tortures, rapes and arson.

The release of three of the detained *Hurriyat* leaders, though a belated and half-hearted step, should be welcomed with the hope that other detained leaders and political activists against whom there arc no specific charges, too will be set free without any further delay. The Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani's offer for talks with *Hurriyat* leaders for resolving the crisis, is only a vindication of the PDF stand that Kashmir problem is basically a political problem and calls for a political solution through a process of dialogue with all

sections of the people. Any meaningful dialogue must be without any preconditions and with an open mind on all sides. PDP hopes that the government of India, realising the gravity of the situation and counterproductive nature of strong-arm methods would immediately take positive initiative for such a purposeful dialogue. The absence of political approach and insensitive character of the state administration have compounded the overall situation of the state. Innocent people, caught in the cross fires, arc losing their lives and belongings. The administration is paralysed. The public belief is that whatever gets done, is done for gratification and personal gains. Hundreds of millions of rupees raised as taxes or loans from the Jammu and Kashmir Bank or funds from Government of India arc being squandered and pocketed. Employment is another major scandal and fiasco. It is a widely accepted fact in the media as well that the bribes are openly being charged for any kind of employment. On the other hand a large army of bound men, many of them highly qualified, are without useful work of any kind. They are frustrated and rapidly losing patience which will undoubtedly lend weight to the civil commotion, disaffection and uncontrollable anarchy in the Slate. Development has, for all practical purpose, taken a back seat. The prices of essential commodities have skyrocketed causing further hardships to the people. The social services like education and health-care have fast deteriorated and there is acute shortage of power, water supply and other services. On all fronts, may it be political, economic or security, the Chief Minister is blaming others for his own ineffectiveness as a daily routine. The harsh reality has become evident that the present Government is a non-functional government which has lost its grass root support of the people. The need of the hour is to seek all possible solutions to bring order out of the prevailing chaos in Jammu and Kashmir. Thus in order to break the shackles of insensitivencss of the present Government towards the problems of the people and in order to be heard by the deaf ears of the Administration. PDP urges for taking the following steps to solve urgent social, political and economic issues concerning the people.

Immediate initiation for a meaningful dialogue Immediate release of all political detenues.

An end to day to day killings, harassment and persecution of innocents and violation of human rights.

Stop harassment and pressure tactics applied to release militants for working with security agencies.

Sustenance allowance to the highly educated youth till alternate avenues of employment are provided to them.

A rational electricity tariff. Tariff to be charged according to electricity supply. And immediate replacement of damaged transformers.

Back breaking increase in rates by the Government in essential commodities like ration gas. and kerosene oil must be reversed.

Probe in corruption and illegal wealth and property amassed by the Chief Minister, his ministerial colleagues and other legislators of his party, after assuming power in 1996.

Probe in the corruption, favouritism and irregularity in providing the Government jobs.

Probe in corruption and favouritism and irregularity in distribution of works and large scale bunglings in the funds of Rural Development Department.

Probe in corruption, favouritism and irregularity extending relief to the poor under central sponsored schemes, especially *Indira Awas Yojna*.

Rehabilitation of migrants and Refugees.

The PDP express grave concern over the deteriorating economic condition of the people which is directly affected by the ever deteriorating financial situation of this State. We demand the release of a white paper by the Government on the overall financial situation of the State with particular reference to the special assistance released to State by the Central Government. Though the people of this State are facing countless problems, few of them need immediate addressal and which arc as under:

Power sector, small and medium Industries, public Medicare. Educational system and its infrastructure. Irrigation schemes. Agriculture and Horticulture sector, Roadways, Tourism and its

infrastructure, conservation of forests and environment and last but not the least, honourable and safe return of Pandit brothers to their homes, payment of COLA to Public Sector employees etc. deserve top priority in such addressal. The present unrest among all the sections of the people has been exploited by the ruling party to encourage and perpetuate communal polarisation.

There is urgent need to take necessary steps for providing equitable sense of participation and belonging to people in all the regions and areas of the State, for putting an end to the policy of discrimination, for ensuing equitable share in power and development for all the people through a process of democratic decentralisation.

The PDP is of the considered view that the Government which has failed in providing the basic needs, of the people, which lacks will and vision in addressing and redressing the day-to-day problems of its people and safeguarding the life and property of the innocent people, has no moral right to stick to power and should resign forthwith.

In sum and substance, this memorandum addresses the fundamental issues plaguing the Valley. Now the onus lies squarely with the government at Centre to take the initiative. If it wants to seriously bring Kashmir back on the rails—herein lies the catch.

May, 2000

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It appears the grandiose talks between Government of India and Hurriyat have fallen at the first hurdle. The dialogue was given a premature farewell. In the initial stages both sides made positive gestures especially when the Hurriyat detenues were released unconditionally. Hurriyat on its part sent confusing signals in the beginning. Their every statement was attached with a rider. They were the ones who had advocated free and unfettered dialogue. But when such opportunity came, they started attaching preconditions which ranged from strictures on army and paramilitary forces; probe into alleged human rights excesses and last but not the least, inclusion of Pakistan into negotiations. It is quite understandable as they can not move a muscle without consent of their trans-border masters.

The crux of the matter is somewhat different. No solution to Kashmir is possible without involving people from the entire spectrum of Kashmir. By saying this I mean leaders of all political parties, intellectuals, journalists and so called militants. Hurriyat to my mind is not the ultimate representative body of the people as is the impression being given. On contrary they represent a miniscule of the people in the Valley and are quite insignificant in Jammu region and Ladakh. That has to be borne in mind. By that criteria, the entire exercise under the garb of dialogue witnessed recently was in fact a game of one upmanship aimed at increasing the individual stocks of the parties involved.

Why is government reluctant to go all out in pursuit of solution,

is something which is hard to understand. After initial euphoria and drum beating it seems every thing fizzles out to be a damp squib.

For the remedial measures, if at all somebody is interested in such quest, one can always take out a leaf from P.V. Narasimha Rao's book. There is no need to go far. The entire reconciliatory package offered by Narasimha Rao had all the ingredients of final solution to the Kashmir problem, including the vexing issue of autonomy. No proactive policy or sabre rattling can bring peace in the Valley. What we are witnessing in Kashmir today is consequence of proactive, eye-for-an-eye type of approach, which is self destructive right from the outset. Signs of a prude and broad based solution to Kashmir are conspicuous by their absence on the political landscape of Delhi and Srinagar. Time and again we have persistently sought to stimulate public opinion on the subject through the platform of 'Decide'. Knowing fully well that ours is a small magazine thereby our efforts in this regard are like drops in the ocean. Irrespective of this fact we will continue our pursuit, which we feel is our moral responsibility. Talking of responsibility, I am amazed how easily Kashmir Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah blames others for his own mistakes and wrong decisions. For him whatever happens in his state is beyond his control. For financial chaos in the state, the Centre is to be blamed irrespective of lavish personal expenditures of the Chief Minister and his colleagues. The best pointer in this direction is multi crore golf course in Srinagar, which attracted keen interest of Dr Abdullah.

He is so passionate about his golf that he brooks no interference while he is indulging in his passion. Photographer of a national daily will bear testimony to this. Poor chap had committed the cardinal sin of taking snaps of the Chief Minister while he was playing golf guarded by commandos. A team of state police later whisked him away and removed the reel from his camera. I wish he had displayed same zeal while handling the affairs of the state. While Dr Abdullah was busy with his hobbies, the militants busied themselves with bold attacks on the Secretariat and other high security targets.

The valley witnessed shift in the pattern of militant attacks. Unlike the suicide attacks seen earlier, this time the ultras went in

for high profile spectacular attacks aimed at demoralising the security forces and sending the message that it is they who call the shots. It explains the brutal killing of State Minister of power Ghulam Hassan Bhat who was killed along with his bodyguards in a meticulously planned land mine blast. As usual Farooq Abdullah found scapegoat in ISI, agreed that ISI and Pakistan are responsible for the mayhem in Kashmir, but what is he doing to counteract that? For how long would he be allowed to treat Kashmir as his personal fiefdom? When it comes to securing a ministerial berth for his son in the Central Government, Farooq Abdullah has the resources, but the same person is absolutely helpless and powerless in other matters like securing money for welfare and developmental schemes for the valley. At least that is the impression he gives.

Recent demolition blitzkrieg launched by Union Minister Jagmohan turned out to be a red herring. When hon'ble minister gave the impression that he was all for purging Delhi of unscrupulous land mafia and land sharks, the common man heaved a sigh of relief. Jagmohan was in his element breathing fire and brimstone over the culprits of capital's civic mess. His fulminations earned him sobriquet of Delhi's demolition man. But instead of targetting land mafia and the big sharks, our demolition man turned his ire on hapless common man residing in DDA flats who had made some adjustments in his living unit which were outside permissible limits. That is how Mr Jagmohan sought to curb the problem of encroachments. He is the best person to know the reasons for his actions but for us the logic is pretty clear. Land mafia can get away with any thing and innocent people have to pay for the sins of land grabbers. Majority of public land in Delhi is under the control of the land mafia. These people have their tentacles firmly entrenched in the circles of power. What they fail to get through their powerful contacts they get through brazen use of muscle power. Such is their clout in Delhi. If Jagmohan singles out the hapless citizens as the major cause of encroachment in Delhi, his party will have to pay a heavy price for his actions.

As every dark cloud has a silver lining in it, the same way, Commissioner of Slums, Mr Manjeet Singh is the only silver lining in the otherwise murky scene. For him there is hardly any difference

between a land grabber and a felon. That explains the success of his demolition drive where he was instrumental in reclaiming major chunk of government land worth crores of rupees from the clutches of land racketeers. His story does not end here. Mr Singh is also responsible for the rehabilitation and relocation of poor people who are victims of the land mafia.

June, 2000

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Respected Shri Atal Behari Vajpayeeji,

I consider it my moral and social duty to voice the concerns of Kashmir and its people. Not by the virtue of my birth but by the strength of conviction. The true feelings of Kashmiri people are altruistically documented in the form of an open letter to you with the hope that it would be different this time.

Accession of Kashmir into India was a historic and undisputable event. Equally historic was the venue, Srinagar's *Lal Chowk*, where it was signed. Those were the glory days of Kashmir which lapsed into oblivion thereafter. All promises made to the Valley remained just pious words. Farcical elections with sole exception of 1971, drove people into abject despair. Things came to such a pass that youth, disillusioned and embittered with sordid and staid state of affairs, picked up the gun as a token of disgust. The case of present *Hurriyat* heavyweight, Yasin Malik, is a poignant pointer in this direction. He was polling agent of Syed Salahuddin from Amirakadal in one of the rigged elections. Today Syed Salahuddin is Commander-in-Chief of *Hizbul Mujahadeen*. What to speak of Kashmiri culture when minority Pandit community was systematically droven out of the Valley through vandalism, rape and plunder unleashed at Pakistan's behest.

Thanks to its controversial history, J & K today increasingly resembles the fabled Gordian knot, the more you try to unravel it the more tangled it gets. This view gains currency in the light of recently concluded special session on much touted "greater

autonomy." National Conference led by your esteemed coalition partner Dr Farooq Abdullah, claims that had it not been for NC "India would have said *Khuda Hafiz* to Kashmir long ago." If my memory serves me right, in 1990 it was Farooq Abdullah who bade good-bye to Kashmir at the height of its crisis, only to return after successive governors had restored a measure of normalcy. It should be remembered that the Abdullah family has ruled the troubled state for 25 years and far from finding a solution has succeeded only in compounding the problem. Despite his demand for greater autonomy, Dr. Farooq Abdullah has always had a very special undefined relationship with Centre; so much so that he even joined hands with your party BJP—which has a completely different take on Kashmir.

Mr. Prime Minister, the autonomy report or resolution is not about empowering the people; it would end up empowering those who are already in power. It would be useful to recall that when Sheikh Abdullah, on his return to power in seventies, insisted on pre-1953 Constitutional position as the basic premise for talks with the Centre. He had an important point to make. Since he had been removed from power in 1953, he insisted on reverting to that year as a defining landmark of settlement with Centre. Therefore like a true son, Farooq Abdullah wants to follow his father's footsteps. So it is not surprising that the report is a party document tailor-made to suit the power pursuit of NC—not to speak of the manner in which it was prepared. After the Chairman of autonomy panel was removed midway through, Farooq Abdullah deputed one of his senior party colleague to supervise the formulation of the report. In this exercise, there was hardly any consultation with state's population and remained little debated until the recent special session on autonomy. Sir, the real motive behind the report is quite contrary to ostensible. Autonomy is Farooq Abdullah's best and last weapon to counter *Hurriyat*. If he can get the Centre to go along on autonomy, that will automatically end all the parleys with *Hurriyat*. There seems to be no logical reason except sheer opportunism behind your party's honeymoon with NC. On the face of it, you are ideologically at loggerheads with NC. Your party regards autonomy as "a transgression of Constitution." Claiming that proposal is

anomalous as it wants to set the clock back by almost half a century. There are fears that autonomy package, if accepted would keep the state effectively out of ambit of country's judicial and Constitutional control. If that is the case, can somebody explain the reasons behind BJP-NC bonhomie?

Ladakh is and others who are protesting against autonomy are justified in their resentment. Hindus of Jammu and Buddhists of Leh fear that if the state gets greater autonomy, it would weaken their relations with the rest of the country and marginalise their status in autonomous administrative set up that might emerge. The report for some strange and compelling reasons maintains status quo on POK. Has Farooq Abdullah forgotten that elected constituent assembly of J & K was made up of 43 members from Kashmir, 30 from Jammu and two from Ladakh? 25 seats had been left vacant for POK. Dr Abdullah has no business bartering away even by suggestion what legally and constitutionally is a part of state and country. Sir, was it not in 1994 that Parliament had adopted an unanimous resolution to liberate POK.

While Dr Abdullah is busy with his autonomy theatrics, the stark reality of law and order situation lends a false ring to the tall claims to normalcy. A total number of 195 security personnel have been killed between January 1 - June 28 this year. Last year saw an average of 90 attacks on security forces' pickets and patrols. This year the average has shot up to 105. The acceptable casualty ratio is one soldier to 18 militants. Before Kargil, this figure used to be 1:9. Today it is 2:5. The number of AK-47 seizures has declined from 607 captured in the first six months of 1999 to 580 seized so far. Respected Vajpayee*ji*, without sounding immodest I would like to remind my readers that way back in July '99 edition of our magazine, I had expressed my forebodings about moves of trifurcation of J & K state on ethnic lines. My fears were substantiated by ensuing events, when US backed Pied Piper of Kashmir Farooq Kathwari of New York based Kashmir Study Group, came with his bewitching brand of lyrics on Kashmir solution. Everyone from top to bottom took his bait hook, line and sinker. What he had to offer was equally galling. His recipe for solution to Kashmir was in the form of a paper titled, "Kashmir—A

Way Forward." It advocated creating a "Muslim majority entity with its own Constitution, citizenship, flag and a legislature which would legislate on all matters other than defence and foreign affairs."

In implied sense it meant splitting Jammu and Kashmir into three parts. While Ladakh and most of Jammu will remain in India, the Muslim majority areas of the Valley and Jammu will form an autonomous state sharing porous borders with Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Hon'ble Prime Minister, can the nationalist BJP even afford to consider this? After Farooq Kathwari, it was the turn of another US backed spin doctor Mansoor Ijaz of Pakistani origin, to come to India with his bagful of solutions. M.I.T. trained nuclear physicist Mansoor Ijaz who is Chairman of New York based Crescent Equity Investment and a member of the influential Council of Foreign Relations, arrived in Srinagar in second week of May. Ijaz is personally very close to President Clinton even to the extent of bankrolling the election campaign of Democratic Party. His visit was shrouded in utmost secrecy. In Srinagar, Ijaz was accorded top level official access. On May 10, Farooq Abdullah hosted a dinner in his honour at former's residence on Srinagar's Gupkar Road. What was the nature of his confabulations with Kashmiri officials and politicians is not known at the moment. But sources however say that Ijaz held a second set of meetings with top officials of your office - i.e. PMO. His intentions, so far as you are concerned, may be above the suspicion. But for us his credentials are crystal clear. He wrote an article entitled "India's Brutality in Kashmir" in May 2000 issue of Pakistan magazine, "The Herald." The principal thrust of the article was to blunt American-Indian community's campaign to have Pakistan declared a terrorist state by the US. Do we further need any proof of man's ulterior motives? Respected Atal*ji*, you owe nation an answer. What transpired in his meetings with government officials throughout his stay in India?

Respected and Dear Vajpayee*ji*, you being a seasoned and upright politician-cum-statesman need not be told about the real American designs on Kashmir. Since independence the US has been desperately trying to wedge a foothold in Kashmir through one ruse or the other. Successive governments at Centre had kept the

Americans at bay. It is only since last year that red carpets have been rolled out for peace brigade from the US. We want to know, at what cost? Please remember history will never forgive any government if it succumbed to American inspired trifurcation moves.

Speaking of solutions, I wonder how is any solution to Kashmir issue feasible without inclusion of Kashmiri Pandits into the ambit of dialogue? Sadly, this aspect has been grossly overlooked and ignored by all and sundry. Kashmiris now have had .enough of piped dreams. They want a realistic approach with a humanistic touch. Sir, please bear in mind, selective and ethnocentric strategies and policies will only aggravate the situation. Any initiative on Kashmir has to be totally indigenous in nature and egalitarian in outlook. Indigenous because too many cooks spoil the broth.

With Regards,

Bee Kay

Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India, New Delhi

July, 2000

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Dear and Respected Shri Atal Behari Vajpayeeji,

I took the privilege to write you an open letter in these columns in our July edition of the magazine. I think the same escaped your kind attention and that being the reason I am repeating the letter in the August issue of the magazine so that you find time to go through its contents. I am conscious of the fact that many individuals, agencies, government and non-government figures and some politicians are at the top of the list trying to help find a solution. But the fact remains that till now probably nobody has been able to feel the pulse of the problem. It is a good publicity material if some persons from Delhi go to the Valley and organise seminars, give proposals and receive counter proposals. This effort may be an ingredient for solving the problem but not a final solution in itself. Everybody is probably indulging in the game of one-upmanship and the real problem is where it was a number of years back.

Mr. Prime Minister one thing is to be understood clearly—Kashmir and Kashmiri people have undergone a tremendous change. A new crop of young generation has surfaced on the horizon of Kashmir. Let me assure you Sir, that they do not want their fate to be decided by political brokers who may be on the scene under any shape or garb. The need of the hour is to talk directly to this new class which has emerged on the scene. Our ex- Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao was near to the solution but his government did not last and subsequent governments took the follow up action in

their own way which was based more on political compulsions than national consensus. You may consult Mr. Rao *saheb*. I and my friends during those days assisted Mr. Rao in his efforts to resolve the issue.

Autonomy chapter of Mr. Abdullah's brand, to my mind, is over. But what beats the understanding is why an olive branch is being offered to Farooq Abdullah. He should be categorically told "No" in clear terms. Especially when government cannot even think of granting autonomy on the lines demanded by Farooq Abdullah. It is not that Kashmiri wants autonomy. No. Overwhelming part of population neither wants to go to Pakistan nor do they want *Azaadi*. A Kashmiri is talking of *Azaadi* mainly because he has not got clean governance so far and could not exercise his right to vote of his choice and sweet will.

Sir, if it was Farooq Abdullah's purpose to derail the proposed process of conducting dialogue with the Hurriyat leaders by raising so much hype over Kashmir autonomy report, then he has nearly succeeded in doing so, at least for the present. In view of harsh criticism emanating from wide spectrum of public opinion in the country, Farooq Abdullah has sought to cut a figure of sweet reasonableness by urging a 'national debate' on the subject. Whereas the report has not even been adequately opened to public debate within the state assembly. Here lies the travesty of the whole episode.

The people of Jammu region perceived the autonomy move as one aimed at further fuelling the separatist movement. Those in the Valley dubbed it as a political gimmick by Farooq to strengthen his position in the State. Needless to say, the credibility of Farooq Abdullah and his government has hit rock bottom.

Never mind, Farooq Abdullah's sloppy record in non-governance, which has contributed amply to the prevailing chaos, the seemingly absurd autonomy-theatrics have exposed the credentials of all principal characters in the game. NDA government's flip-flop over the autonomy resolution, before squelching it, has put a question mark on its claim to a cogent Kashmir policy.

There is a long list of the naive components of Centre's gameplan (a) Overtures for a dialogue with *Hurriyat* leaders behind Farooq Abdullah back (b) Complete failure to anticipate the implications of the Assembly's vote on the autonomy resolution; (c) Inability to rein in irrepressible Chief Minister who is a coalition partner in NDA.

The list is endless. On the flipside, Farooq has said that India has not fulfilled its promise of a plebiscite and that it is moving back from the assurances which it gave at the time of State's accession to India, etc. He has also been critical of the role of Indian security forces in maintaining internal security and peace in the State.

Hon'ble Prime Minister, there is another vital question pertaining to national security. Can India afford to weaken its links and operational jurisdiction over J & K, in the face of hostile relations with Pakistan and continued influx of militants from Afghanistan? These militants not only dominate the militancy in the Valley, but they are also trying to gain foothold in Ladakh. Jammu is just like their backyard. Such grave implications beget a question. Was Farooq Abdullah aware of all this when he was clamouring for autonomy? The report for some strange and compelling reasons maintains status quo on POK. Has Farooq Abdullah forgotten that elected constituent assembly of J & K was made up of 43 members from Kashmir, 30 from Jammu and two from Laddakh. 25 seats had been left vacant for POK. Dr Abdullah has no business bartering away even by suggestion what legally and constitutionally is a part of state and country. Sir, was it not in 1994 that Parliament had adopted an unanimous resolution to liberate POK.

While Dr Abdullah is busy with his autonomy theatrics, the stark reality of law and order situation lends a false ring to the tall claims to normalcy. A total number of 195 security personnel have been killed between January 1 to June 28 this year. Last year saw an average of 90 attacks on security forces' pickets and patrols. This year the average has shot up to 105. The acceptable casualty ratio is one soldier to 18 militants. Before Kargil, this figure used to be 1:9. Today it is 2:5. The number of AK-47 seizures has declined from 607 captured in the first six months of 1999 to 580 seized so far.

Respected Vajpayee*ji* without sounding immodest I would like to remind my readers that way back in July '99 edition of our magazine, I had expressed my forebodings about moves of trifurcation of J & K state on ethnic lines. My fears were substantiated by ensuing events, when US backed Pied Piper of Kashmir, Farooq Kathwari of New York based Kashmir Study Group, came with his bewitching brand of lyrics on Kashmir solution. Everyone from top to bottom took his bait hook, line and sinker. What he had to offer was equally galling. His recipe for solution to Kashmir was in the form of a paper titled, "Kashmir - A Way Forward." It advocated creating a "Muslim majority entity with its own Constitution, citizenship, flag and a legislature which would legislate on all matters other than defence and foreign affairs".

In implied sense it meant splitting Jammu and Kashmir into three parts. While Ladakh and most of Jammu will remain in India, the Muslim majority areas of the Valley and Jammu will form an autonomous state sharing porous borders with Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Hon'ble Prime Minister, can the nationalist BJP even afford to consider this?

After Farooq Kathwari, it was the turn of another US backed spin doctor Mansoor Ijaz of Pakistani origin, to come to India with his bagful of solutions. M.I.T. trained nuclear physicist Mansoor Ijaz who is Chairman of New York based Crescent Equity Investment and a member of influential Council of Foreign Relations, arrived in Srinagar in second week of May. Ijaz is personally very close to President Clinton even to the extent of bankrolling the election campaign of Democratic Party. His visit was shrouded in utmost secrecy. In Srinagar. Ijaz was accorded top level official access. On May 10, Farooq Abdullah hosted a dinner in his honour at former's residence on Srinagar's Gupkar Road. What was the nature of his confabulations with Kashmiri officials and politicians is not known at the moment. But sources however say that Ijaz held a second set of meetings with top officials of your office—i.e. PMO. His intentions, so far as you are concerned, may be above the suspicion. But for us his credentials are crystal clear. He wrote an article entitled, "India's Brutality in Kashmir" in May

2000 issue of Pakistan magazine, *The Herald*. The principal thrust of the article was to blunt American-Indian community's campaign to have Pakistan declared a terrorist state by US. Do we further need any proof of man's ulterior motives? Respected Atal*ji*, you owe nation an answer - What transpired in his meetings with government officials throughout his stay in India?

Respected and Dear Vajpayee*ji*, you being a seasoned and upright politician-cum-statesman need not be told about the real American designs on Kashmir. Since independence, US has been desperately trying to wedge a foothold in Kashmir through one ruse or the other. Successive governments at Centre had kept the Americans at bay. It is only since last year that red carpets have been rolled out for peace brigade from US. We want to know, at what cost? Please remember history will never forgive any government if it succumbed to American inspired trifurcation moves.

Speaking of solutions, I wonder how is any solution to Kashmir issue feasible without inclusion of Kashmiri Pandits into the ambit of dialogue? Sadly, this aspect has been grossly overlooked and ignored by all and sundry. Kashmiris now have had enough of piped dreams. They want a realistic approach with a humanistic touch. Sir, please bear in mind, selective and ethnocentric strategies and policies will only aggravate the situation. Any initiative on Kashmir has to be totally indigenous in nature and egalitarian in outlook. Indigenous because too many cooks spoil the broth.

With Regards,

Bee Kay

Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India, New Delhi

August, 2000

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Respected Shri Atal Behari Vajpayeeji,

I have already penned two open letters to you through these columns earlier but I presume that due to hectic schedule and immense time constraints you were unable to take cognisance ot my letters. That however, has not dampened my spirits. Though I am a small and insignificant individual but that in no way would deter me from carrying out my moral responsibility as a patriot towards my motherland. I have chronicled the acts of violence in Kashmir as reported in media throughout the month of August in this letter. I am addressing another open letter to you and I pray against prayer that you would find time to glance at it. Sir, being at the helm of affairs of the country your goodself may already have been aware of these incidents. Kashmir bleeds more profusely whenever there is any move to heal its wounds. Pointless to say, this happens despite government's situation-under-control postures, inspite of repeated advance intelligence reports of impending massacres, sabotage and disturbances. The fury of violence witnessed, in the month of August, and documented below puts a question mark before government's ability to contain it, let alone exterminate it.

1.8.2000

In the first major attack since last month's ceasefire declaration by Hizbul Mujahideen, heavily armed militants, believed to be foreign mercenaries, fired rockets and grenades at an Army camp in north of Kashmir killing six personnel and injuring seven others.

Militants launched rocket-propelled grenades towards the administrative block of the Army transit camp at Sunderbani in

Bandipora, 60 km from here.

2.8.2000

At least 21 people, including 11 Amarnath pilgrims, were gunned down and 22 injured when suspected foreign mercenaries opened fire on them on the outskirts of Pahalgam. about 96 km from here, official sources said. Two militants were killed when security forces retaliated, the sources said. Unofficial sources put the death toll at 24. (According to Home Ministry sources. 23 people, including 14 Amarnath-bound pilgrims were killed when militants belonging to Pakistan-supported militant outfit *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* fired indiscriminately at a camp in Pahalgam. Thirty, including 13 local Muslims, were injured in the incident. Among the dead were seven local Muslims and two terrorists, reports HTC).

In a separate strike, militants attacked a registration camp of Amarnath pilgrims in Jammu hurling grenades and opening fire from automatic weapons. But none was hurt. One militant was killed when policemen on duty at the camp fired back.

3.8.2000

In what by any reckoning is the bloodiest series of attacks in over ten years of mayhem in Jammu and Kashmir, militants opposed to the *Hizbul Mujahadeen's* ceasefire declaration gunned down over 100 people and left scores of others wounded.

Barely two hours after they killed 35 people (23 of them Amarnath pilgrims) in Pahalgam. Heavily armed militants struck in Doda, Kupwara and Anantnag districts, killing at least 65 people in a scries of attacks. Of the 35 people killed in the attack on the pilgrimage base camp, eight were Muslims, mainly shopkeepers and porters.

The victims of the bloody attacks in Mirbazar-Qazigund and neighbouring Sandoo-Acchabal in Anantnag district were migrant labourers from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. The killers lined up the labourers who worked in brick kilns in Sandoo-Acchabal. segregated them from their women folk and then shot them outside their huts.

Militants shot dead seven persons in two attacks in Doda district, one of them in the remote village of Khodinadh near

Banihal off the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway. A village defence group was sprayed with bullets when it was on patrol in Doda's Dachan village, leaving eight dead and two wounded. In Kupwara in northern Jammu and Kashmir seven members of the family of an ex-militant who had surrendered were lined up and shot dead in cold blood.

3.8.2000

The series of militant strikes in Jammu and Kashmir forced the Centre to postpone for the time being its proposed contacts with the *Hizbul Mujahadeen* leadership for setting up a mechanism for talks on the implementation of the cease-fire.

All through the day, Home Ministry officials were busy assessing the ground queered up badly by fresh bloodletting in the Valley and the Jammu region. Union Home Secretary Kamal Pande, who was to have left for Srinagar for establishing contact with the Hizb interlocutor. Fazal Haq Qureshi. called off his visit to be available for high-level consultations in Delhi.

4.8.2000

One person was stabbed to death and another died after the police opened fire to disperse a violent mob in Surat during today's Gujarat bandh. The call for the day-long protests was made by the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* against the killing of Amarnath devotees in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam town.

The police had a tough time controlling angry protesters in Surat, Ahmedabad and Sabarkantha. Curfew was imposed in Khedbrahma town of Sabharkantha district in north Gujarat after shops were set ablaze.

In the Varacha area of Surat City, supporters of the bandh set ablaze two buses and attempts were made to increase the tally. Stabbings, looting of shops and stone-pelting were widespread.

In the commercial city of Ahmedabad. stones were hurled, bus tyres deflated and arsonists attacked vehicles at random. Lathi, trident and knife wielding Bajrang Dal activists forced unwilling shopkeepers to down their shutters.

5.8.2000

A couple of hundred metres from Muslim-dominated Gujjar Nagar in the heart of the city, three Kashmiri militants had tried to attack an Amarnath Yatra registration camp and, according to the police, take pilgrims hostage.

6.8.2000

The body of missing German tourist Harfurt Rolf was brought here from Zanskar in the Ladakh Himalayas which was handed over to officials of Germany Embassy. Unidentified militants abducted Rolf from Zanskar last month.

7.8.2000

Ten people, including six militants and a security jawan, were killed and two others injured in separate incidents in J & K.

8.8.2000

The army has recovered large quantity of arms and ammunition from the Namblan forest in the Rajouri areas of J & K.

11.8.2000

The Indian security had intercepted messages from Pakistan to militant units in the valley asking them to attack civilians and civilian targets to mark the end of the ceasefire. A senior member of the National Security establishment told journalists that the government expected more ISI-inspircd terrorist violence. He was speaking shortly after this morning's blast in Srinagar that killed 13 persons, including Pradccp Bhatia, a senior photographer of *The Hindustan Times*.

Though the *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* has claimed responsibility for the Srinagar blast, the Centre says that Pakistan has contacted a variety of terrorist organisations to foment violence in the State. The security services are also worried by *Hizbul Mujahadeen* Chief Syed Salahuddin's reported statement to an Australian journalist that his organisation would launch more attacks and target other parts of India, and not just Kashmir.

14.8.2000

Striking in a big way two days after the car bomb blast in Srinagar, *Hizbul Mujahadeen* militants today targeted a BSF convoy triggering two separate explosions killing eight BSF personnel and

injuring 50 others—15 of them critically, in Udhampur district, 9 kms from Jammu.

The convoy was going from Jammu to Srinagar carrying reinforcements on the eve of Independence Day. Two other explosions also rocked Nishat and Sangrama. but there were no reported casualties.

14.8.2000

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat called for settlement of the Kashmir issue within the framework of the Shimla Agreement. Arafat met Gen. Pervez Musharraf at a brief stopover in Islamabad.

15.8.2000

Security forces busted two militant hideouts and seized a big cache of explosives on the eve of Independence Day in Kalaroos and Cherkote areas of frontier district of Kupwara.

The cache included 50 kgs of explosives. 50 anti-tank grenades. 40 anti-personnel mines. 50 rifle grenades, two RPG rockets, a booster charger and 26 detonators, an official spokesman said. However, no one was arrested in this connection. Meanwhile, four people. including two security personnel and a policemen, were injured in militant attacks, while security forces averted a tragedy in Kashmir valley since last night.

16.8.2000

As August 15 nears, tension mounts in streets and corridors of power where even one is gripped with uncertainty. The streets are filled by security personnel. It appears as if uniformed men are taking over control of the roads and streets as pedestrians rush home in haste.

Fear is high even by Kashmir standards as Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) roll down the streets with troopers looking for potential grenade throwers or bomb planters. The uniformed men on foot scan the men moving on the streets. To them, everyone is suspect.

16.8.2000

In an apparent play of words, *Hizbul Mujahadeen* reworded its pre-condition for resumptions of talks with the Centre. "If India is

serious to resolve Kashmir issue and interested in ending the untold miseries people of Jammu and Kashmir have been put to, she should accept the disputed status of the state and accept Pakistan as a party to the issue." A statement released by the outfit to the local press said.

17.8.2000

Police claimed *Hizbul Mujahadeen* militants attacked a hideout of the *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba*, killing one LeT rebel and wounding another in Niki Mori Dhok village at Surankot on Monday night, indicating a rift in militant joined villagers in attacking the hideout following severe beating of Haji Lal Hussain of Mehrot village by LeT militants, police sources in Jammu said.

18.8.2000

"The recent clashes between the *Hizbul Mujahadeen* and the *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* cadres in the frontier district of Poonch have the potential of snow balling into a far bigger crisis than what appears on the surface," security analysts in Kashmir say. Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police Gurbachan Jagat viewed these clashes as the "beginning of bigger and larger clashes in other parts of the States."

18.8.2000

Indian troops beat back a raid by Pakistani soldiers in Nowshera sector and killed four of them. Later, the Army stepped up vigil along the Line of Control (LoC).

Around midnight, jawans were alerted by rustling sounds and immediately sensed Pakistani troops were trying to raid their post. Maj. Gen. P.P.S. Bindra said the "operation was over within minutes. The Pakistanis fled the scene leaving behind one body." Pakistan however, denied its troops had crossed the LoC and attacked an Indian Army post. In other incidents, an Army patrol party was targeted with an IED between Bazulla and Nachalana in Pir Panjal range. Two soldiers were killed and two wounded. *Hizbul Mujahadeen* owned responsibility for the blast. Militant fired a series of rockets at the battalion headquarters of the 8 Jat Regiment in Chokibal area in Kupwara.

19.8.2000

The Indian army has the capability to strike and knock out training camps of militants across the Line of Control (LoC) or blow up those camps the way the US did two years ago to avenge bombing of its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, assert senior Army officers here. But there is no such suggestion from the top. These Army officers, who have dealt with counter-insurgency at different levels in Jammu and Kashmir since the beginning of the insurgency 10 years ago, said that it was very difficult to attribute a definition to hot pursuit.

"It remains undefined in terms of how much depth and level of use of force which is needed. Moreover, any physical movement across the LoC should conform to the policy decisions at the highest level, say Army officers.

19.8.2000

Militants killed six persons of a community in the Kotdhara village of Rajouri district. An indefinite curfew has been imposed in the area.

The incident took place at around 8 p.m. when heavily armed militants descended upon the village and started firing. The militants' main targets were members of the village defence committee (VDC). While five men and one woman died on the spot, six others were injured in the incident.

Meanwhile, in Jammu two security personnel and a special police officer (SPO) were killed and two others injured in militancy-related incidents in Jammu division, while two *Hizbul Mujahadeen* militants surrendered. Sources said the two Rashtriya Rifles personnel were killed and two others injured in a landmine explosion in Buzla area of Banihal tehsil in Doda district on August 16.

20.8.2000

Even as Pakistan's Gen Parvez Musharraf called an emergent meeting of his corps commanders to review the Kashmir strategy, the ISI-backed Amir of *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba*, Hafiz Sayed declared a war against the *Hizb* commanders in Srinagar.

The developments across the border portend more blood-letting in the Kashmir Valley with an inter-militants battle at hand.

On the Line-of-Control, the Pakistani Army resorted to heavy shelling to facilitate the infiltration of militants. Six Indian civilians have been injured in the shelling.

Indian security agencies, meanwhile, launched an unprecedented crackdown on foreign mercenaries following a brain-storming meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security presided by the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in New Delhi.

21.8.2000

Militants shot dead four villagers and injured two others of a community in Ind village, a remote hamlet in Gool nearly 200 km south of Srinagar. in a spine-chilling reminder that the killers were on the prowl in hilly villages. In a clear shift from their traditional strategies, militants first targeted a post of Indian Reserve Police (IRP) in the hills overlooking the village from a distance of less than one kilometre. The shootout also brought out the Village Defence Committee personnel, thus leaving the villagers defenceless. Militants effected a split in their group and carried out the massacre in Ind village. The police said that it was around midnight when the villagers were showered with bullets.

22.8.2000

Militants in Kashmir once again chillingly demonstrated their ability to strike at will when they blew up an Army Gypsy, killing a brigadier and a colonel at Jacchildara village, about 55 kms north of the State capital. The Gypsy in which the officers were travelling was passing through Rajwar area in north Kashmir when it struck a landmine. Reports said that the Gypsy was tossed up several feet in the air at the impact of explosion. The officers have been identified as Brig B.S. Shergil and Colonel R.S. Chauhan. Sources said that their bodies were badly mutilated. The Brigadier had been posted to north Kashmir only three days ago.

In another incident, three soldiers were killed and 15 others critically wounded when militants fired rockets at an Army transit camp at Banihal. about 100 kms south of Srinagar.

The camp building presented a sight of burnt bodies and scattered debris, reports reaching here from Banihal said.

23.8.2000

Eighteen people, including 16 militants and a jawan, were killed as security forces stepped up anti-militant operations in Kashmir. Five unidentified militants were killed in a joint operation by the BSF and Army against militants in Razdan forest in Bandipora area of Baramulla district.

24.8.2000

With the arrest of six persons, the Kashmir Police today claimed to have achieved a breakthrough in the August 10 Srinagar blast that left 15 persons dead, including HT photographer Pradeep Bhatia. The police are now on the lookout for a girl student, who was also a part of the militants' "plan" to do something big as a run-up to the Independence Day.

With the arrest of all the "major players'" involved in the blast, it has now been established that the *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* masterminded the blast.

25.8.2000

Indian troops killed at least 10 Pakistani soldiers who had attempted an early morning attack on a post of Mandi sector in Poonch, about 240 km north of Jammu, the winter capital city of Jammu. in one of the fiercest gun fighting, which was termed as a mini war on the Line of Control (LoC).

One Indian soldier died and another injured in the gunfight that was continuing till the last reports came in. Pakistanis came under the cover of darkness at 4 a.m. planning to attack one of the smaller Indian posts, an exercise similar to the one they had attempted three days ago in Kalsiyan area in Rajouri district. Four Pakistani soldiers died as a result of cross-firing during the incident. Today's attempt, when detected by the Indian troops, revealed that about 40 Pakistani soldiers were advancing towards the Indian position. The Indian troops then opened fire which was retaliated by the Pakistani soldiers.

"The Pakistanis carried away most of their dead and wounded. Only two bodies and three weapons were left behind." Maj. Gen PPS Bindra, Major General General Staff (MGGS), Northern Command, told *The Hindustan Times* while giving details of the

attack.

He said that Pakistani Army was resorting to these tactics repeatedly with the intention of creating problems along the LoC.

In another incident, six militants of Jaish-e-Mohammad were killed in an encounter in Chandak area in Poonch district about 240 km from Jammu. According to reports, militants were intercepted by a constable and some of special police officers at Chandak. The encounter with militants lasted throughout the night.

26.8.2000

Nine Militants were among ten people killed in separate incidents in Jammu and Kashmir, where ultras abducted a woman and the Border Security Force repulsed a militant attack since last evening.

26.8.2000

The distinct possibility of re-declaration of ceasefire in Kashmir, also voiced by George Fernandes and indicated by Abdul Majid Dar. Commander-in-Chief of the *Hizbul Mujahadeen*. seems to have caused some scare in Pakistan. The report that more outfits would join in with the *Hizbul* and that the *Hurriyat* also now wants inclusion in peace dialogue must be unnerving for the ISI and the army, said a source in the Peace Research Institute. He added that a psychological campaign to blame Indian intelligence agencies and even New Delhi for failed talks should have been expected. All this would help pre-empt some pressure on Gen. Musharraf when he visits the States. An article in the Jane's Foreign Report is being quoted by Pak-supported lobbies and the media to hold RAW responsible for ruining peace negotiations. Even the CIA has come in for ticking off. But the Jane's write-up has made some relevant observations.

The report has noted that the breakdown of talks earlier this month was signalled by bomb blasts across Kashmir. "The RAW made two fatal misjudgements. First, it over-estimated America's ability to persuade the "rebels" to keep the ceasefire. Second, it did not expect the Pakistani generals to wreck the agreement."

This puts the responsibility for failed talks squarely on Pakistani military rulers. It also underlines the fact that all the militant outfits

are under the influence and guidance of Islamabad rulers. The CIA. it is claimed, is playing a strong behind-the-scenes role. But it is accused of having been over-confident about the outcome of talks.

27.8.2000

Former Union Minister Sushma Swaraj told the BJP national executive that the government's Kashmir policy left much to be desired. She was also critical of the way the Kandahar situation was handled last year. In a candid speech at the meeting, she said the massacre of the Amarnath pilgrims was a blot on the BJP's record. She said while all party MPs would back the Government's Kashmir policy, it was important that they were told of the reasons of the Amarnath massacre.

She said the party rank and file felt let down by the Government's handling of the hijacking of the IA plane last December, when External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh had to accompany the three released terrorists to Kandahar, and there were similar misgivings about the government's actions now. Such incidents sent a wrong signal, she added.

28.8.2000

President Bill Clinton may not perform the role of the match-maker, so assiduously sought by Pakistan, but will continue to hardsell his prescription of four R's on Kashmir and Indo-Pak relations during Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit.

Under the four R's that he expounded during his visit to the subcontinent last March, Clinton issued a call for restraint, respect for the Line of Control, renunciation of violence and resumption of dialogue.

When he receives Vajpayee at the White House on September 15. Clinton is expected to place as much emphasis on resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan as on renunciation of violence. In a way. New Delhi has been saying much the same thing by linking talks with cessation of cross-border terrorism.

Speaking to *The Hindustan Times,* sources in the State Department have stuck to the line that Washington is not going to prescribe a solution for Kashmir. Nor is it going to offer to mediate in the festering dispute. But. it would very much want India and Pakistan to resume their stalled dialogue. The US was quick to

condemn the incidents. After the Pahalgam massacre, Clinton spoke to Pakistan's Chief Executive Gen Pervez Musharraf to voice his acute concern.

28.8.2000

In re-deploying its forces post-Kargil in the Dras sector Pakistan and consequently India have negated a key confidence building measure of not erecting fresh defences within a kilometre of either side of Line of Control (LoC). This measure, which was aimed at preventing undue escalation of military tension along the LoC. was worked out in meetings between the Indian Director of General Military Operations Lt- General N.C. Vij and his Pakistani counterpart Lt-Gen. Tauqir Zia in July, last year.

However. Pakistan apparently first violated this understanding by erecting new defences at Point 5353. a 17.561-foot high peak striding the LoC in the Dras sector. That the Pakistani force did not control Point 5353 prior to the Kargil war is evident from the Indian Army's briefing of the media on July 25, 1999. The Army spokesman was quoted as having said that heavy fighting was on to capture Point 5353 and the tri-junction, both areas vital to gain dominance at the LoC. A day later. Indian DGMO Gen. Vij said that Pakistan had not kept its word on the agreed CBM and was attempting to occupy three features very close to the LoC. This obviously means that Pakistan had breached the LoC CBM and used conflict in the Dras sector to gain dominance of the area.

30.8.2000

The Indian Army blasted a militants' hideout and a Pakistani troops' bunker opposite Kunrali in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir killing at least a dozen Pakistani soldiers and militants.

Meanwhile reports from Srinagar said Ghulam Rasool and his wife Wazeera Begum were seriously wounded by splinters from exploding artillery and mortar shells which landed at Nambla village in Baramulla district. The militants blasted Darhali bridge — a vital military communication link. Commander Nazrul-Islam of Pir Panchal Regiment of *Hizb-ul-Mujahadeen* claimed responsibility for the attack.

Respected Vajpayee*ji*, I am a humble man, who is directly

affected by violence in the Valley. Therefore, I will continue my efforts towards peace in the Valley. Sir, I feel sad by the turn of events in the valley. Peace cannot be achieved by sending emissaries from Delhi who are oblivious of complexities of Kashmir issue, nor can it be achieved by organising symposiums and seminars in the Valley or at Delhi or elsewhere. This is an exercise in futility. Nothing can be achieved by selective policy of talking to one particular group of people in the Valley. Kashmiri people are disgusted with government's lackadaisical attitude towards their woes. They are equally fed up with militancy and time is not far off when people will rise against the militants and also the present N.C. regime. General perception in the valley is that whenever any serious move is made for achieving peace it is somehow spiked by NC as peaceful solution of Kashmir is not on their agenda. They are making hay while the Valley bleeds.

Mr. Prime Minister if you want peace in the Valley you will have to go to the people and talk to them directly and indirectly without any prejudice and precondition. Esoteric language and elitist approach is not appropriate for Kashmir. If you deem it fit I volunteer my services as I also know the subject as well as its key players. People are fed up with militancy and one must know to press the right nerve to be pressed and you will see them on the streets condemning militancy.

With Regards.

BEE KAY

Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee. Hon'ble
Prime Minister of India, New Delhi

September, 2000

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If I am asked what is the height of hypocrisy, I would say without batting an eyelid—Gen. Pervez Musharraf shedding his crocodile's tears over his perceived 'lack of freedom' in Kashmir. As was evident in his speeches on recent US visit.

It was this telling point which Mr. Vajpayee made when he said that, "those who have stifled democracy at home speak of freedom". Similarly, the Indian Prime Minister's castigation of "those who have actively sabotaged a historic peace initiative" are now talking of "new agreements" effectively exposes the treacherous policy which Pakistan is following, for it is not secret that when the Lahore Declaration was being drafted, General Musharraf was feverishly engaged in his Kargil misadventure behind Nawaz Sharif's back, as the latter has revealed. No less damning is Mr. Vajpayee's reminder of Pakistan's "clandestine acquisition" of nuclear weapons while he mocked at its current advocacy of disarmament. But perhaps the most significant reiteration of India's stand was Mr Vajpayee's reference to the fact that "terrorism and dialogue do not go together". Although the point has been made before, it needed to be mentioned in front of a world audience to underscore why India, whose Prime Minister went out of his way to visit Lahore, should now be reluctant to talk to Pakistan. The reason is that Pakistan is now in the grip of elements whose rule not only lacks legitimacy but who seem to be driven by the medieval concept of *jehad* or holy war against infidels. The open manner in which various *jehadi* groups operate in Pakistan, uttering dire threats against India, and the close

involvement of these militants with official Pakistani agencies like the ISI in organising acts of terrorism in Kashmir and elsewhere in India leave little scope for any purposeful dialogue with Islamabad. Talks by themselves are meaningless unless there is a genuine desire for peace. Of all the Governments in Pakistan, the present one shows the least inclination in this respect.

If Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee seemed to carry on with his castigation of Pakistan in his address to a joint session of the US Congress from where he had left off in his speech before the Asia Society earlier, it was evidently with a clear objective in mind. It is obvious enough that India stands today on the threshold of a great future as a result of its people and their 'entrepreneurial skills', as Mr Vajpayee pointed out. But to 'sustain the momentum' of its current progress which has placed it among the 10 fastest growing economies in the world, there is a pressing need for "an Asia that will be at peace with itself," in the Prime Minister's words.

Such a prospect will remain unattainable. However, if India has to deal with a neighbour which has 'fashioned' to quote Mr Vajpayee again, the medieval concept of waging a 'religious war' or *jehad* into 'an instrument of state policy.' In contrast to the conflicts of the last two centuries which were caused by colonial expansion and Great Power ambition, Pakistan's threat to India, both directly as in Kargil and via the ISI-sponsored organisations of Islamic fundamentalism, harks back to the middle ages when religious bigotry was the driving force behind the wars between nations. It is India's misfortune that it has to face such a threat in the new millennium from countries which do not hesitate to unleash ferocious' attacks of 'terrorist violence' merely to show that a 'multireligious society cannot exist'. The reason perhaps is that such a society where all communities live as equal citizens is a modern concept which is beyond the comprehension of a theocratic dictatorship like Pakistan's.

But Mr. Vajpayee did well to emphasize the threat of this 'evil' which India faces. At the same time, it is a challenge not only to India but to the whole lot of civilised nations who are faced with the spectre of hugely destructive modern weapons being carried by

people with medieval minds who have to be defeated to save the future generations from the obscurantist terror of the Taliban variety. As the Prime Minister said, "distance offers no insulation" and any complacence which the US may feel because of its location in between two oceans is misplaced. It goes without saying, therefore, that the world's two largest democracies have a special responsibility for 'combating terrorism' for, otherwise, they will be held accountable for the 'untold suffering' which the *jehadis* will inflict.

As long as the *jehadis* call the shots in Islamabad, therefore, there is little chance of a forward movement in Indo-Pakistani relations, even if this is what the US wants.

The politics of numbers has turned the entire Census operation into a farce in Jammu and Kashmir. Gripped by extreme suspicion and fear of a conspiracy to alter the demographic make-up of various regions, it has polarised not only the common public but even the enumerators on communal lines.

The census operations were stopped after a ban by pro-Pakistan *Hizbul Mujahadeen*, suspecting the genuineness of the process. In fact, the second phase is yet to start because the enumerators as well as people are not ready to take the risk. The apprehensions that the Census was being manipulated to change, the Muslim strengthened alter former Union Minister Prof Saif-ud-Din Soz released data showing what he called "unrealistic difference" in the growth rates of Muslims and Hindus, especially in Jammu province.

Prof Soz, quoting the 1981 Census, said: "The growth rate of Hindus was given as 47.23 per cent in Doda while it was 11.97 per cent in case of Muslims. The growth rate of Hindus in Udhampur district was 45 percent, against 6.35% Muslims. In Kathua, the Hindu growth rate was 39.31% while that of Muslims was shown as 14.57%.

Political opportunism here, has acquired new dimension. Politicians never stop at anything. What Mr Soz is doing is what we call cutting the nose to spite the face. In plain words cheap gimmicry to garner votes at the cost of fragile communal peace in the Valley.

None of the marauding militant outfits operating in Jammu & Kashmir are, legally speaking, unlawful, once they were. The J & K Liberation Front, for example, is a perfectly legitimate body. So are similar other outfits. Thanks to an oversight or deliberate negligence on the part of the government, all these organisations can function legitimately, as long as they do not kill, maim, destroy or otherwise act illegally.

Until February 17 this year, they were, however, all unlawful and did not have the right to even exist as per a Union Government order of February 18, 1996. That was valid for two years and the government extended it for another two years just before its expiry. The extended ban lapsed on February 17 this year.

A ban cannot be slapped at the drop of a hat. First, a tribunal requires to be set up. Such a tribunal has also to see if there is sufficient ground for a ban. But the state government chose to sleep over the exercise of banning the terrorist outfits.

October, 2000

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For Pakistan, the past ten years in which they have attempted to wrest the Valley from India have merely been a low-cost option in which its Army has not fought but at the same time, taken the credit for whatever the Kashmiris have done. Pakistan has itself admitted that about 70,000 Kashmiris have been killed in a conflict not of their own making. The ISI is, of course, using these statistics in an attempt to show that the Indian security forces have been indulging in atrocities. But the irrefutable truth is that the lives that have been lost, have been sacrificed on the altar of Pakistan's territorial ambitions in Kashmir. The figure will be higher if those who have been decimated in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), particularly members of the ethnic *Shia* community there, are also counted. The world is already aware of the manner in which this community, which forms the core of the Northern Light Infantry, was used as cannon fodder during the Kargil misadventure. This realisation became apparent after the attempt by the Pakistan Army to use Kashmiris (the Northern Light Infantry) as cannon-fodder and an expendable spearhead which, if it had succeeded, would have fulfilled the Pakistani dream of capturing more territory in Kashmir. When the intrusions in Kargil did not result in territorial gains for Pakistan, even their dead bodies were left to rot on the Kargil heights. ISI has realised that the Kashmiri militants are not going to sell their motherland to the Pakistanis on the basis of the spurious two-nation theory. And that is why Islamabad and the ISI have been recruiting mercenaries from Afghanistan and the Arab world to do their dirty work for them. In doing this they have taken recourse to

the battle cry of *jehad*.

When General Pervez Musharraf said in a recent interview that Pakistan will use its nuclear weapons if its security is 'jeopardised', he obviously had India in mind. But the fact is that Pakistan's problems have always emerged from within. True, one can understand its nervousness about India's size and potential, which is why Pakistan has always sought powerful friends like the United States and China. But if any factor has undermined Pakistan's security, it is internal. The most obvious example is the formation of Bangladesh whose roots lay, first, in the Bengali-versus-Urdu language agitations of the early fifties and, second, in the brutal behaviour of the Pakistani army in the country's eastern wing after the Awami League's impressive victory in the 1970 elections was negated by the army authorities.

Not only did India have nothing to do with Pakistan's dismemberment at that time, it entered the war only after being attacked in the western sector. Before that its sole preoccupation was with finding food and shelter for the thousands of Bangladeshi refugees who fled to India to escape the Pakistani army's genocidal policies. It may also be necessary to recall that the two earlier wars in 1948 and 1965 began with Pakistani incursions in the northern and western sectors, the first to wrest Kashmir and the second because of the prevailing belief among the Pakistani military rulers that India had been weakened by the Chinese invasion of 1962 and Nehru's death in 1965.

Similarly, there is a pronounced touch of irony in Pakistan's Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar's recent call in Islamabad for solidarity among Muslims on the Kashmir issue. Remarkably, it did not strike the minister, who was addressing the executive council of the World Islamic Congress, that Pakistan should first seek to establish solidarity among Muslims in its own territory who are bitterly divided on sectarian lines, and put an end to the continuing clashes between the armed militias of the various Shia and Sunni sects which claim hundreds of lives every year. If it can claim inability to stop these, it can certainly not do so in respect of its savage repression of *Mohajirs*-Muslims who migrated from India

during and after the Partition of 1947, who seek nothing more than equal opportunities and the right to live with dignity. The fact that General Pervez Musharraf, the junta Chief who seeks respectability by calling himself his country's Chief Executive, is a *Mohajir* hardly makes any difference. He dares not disturb the *status quo* on matters of substance and has come to grief on occasions when he has sought to take the initiative himself. His retreat—in the face of fierce opposition, by fundamentalist Islamic groups—from his attempt in May to amend the notorious Blasphemy Laws, making its misuse against the minorities a little more difficult, is a striking example.

The military has always ruled Pakistan directly or indirectly. Whether Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto or Benazir Bhutto or Nawaz Shariff, Prime Ministers who have fallen foul of army have been removed unceremoniously. Pakistan's military establishment—indeed its economic, political and bureaucratic establishments as well—is Punjabi-dominated; to all purposes its unstated guiding dictum is that all Muslims are equal but Punjabi Muslims are more equal than others. It is this attitude and the colonial exploitation of what was once East Pakistan that led to the emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign State in 1971. Unfortunately for Pakistan, its military establishment has learnt nothing from history. Instead of redressing the genuine grievances of ethnic categories like the *Mohajirs*, *Sindhis, Pathans* and *Baluchis*. it persists with the policy, initiated during the time of General Zia-ul-Haq, of making Islamic fundamentalism the nation's cementing ideology. The sectarian clashes plaguing Pakistan are the direct result of the rise of armed and militant sectarian groups that the policy encouraged. Not surprisingly, the various fundamentalist militias that Pakistan has set up to pursue its proxy war against India are beginning to fight among themselves. The signs are ominous and Pakistan faces not only an economic collapse but anarchy as well. The only way it can avert such a fate is by abandoning its attempt to ride the tiger of Islamic fundamentalism and establishing friendly and peaceful ties with India. Unfortunately. Sattar's remarks and other minatory statements, show that it will persist on the suicidal path of confrontation.

For several weeks now Kashmir has been hanging between hope and despair, caught between the obduracy shown by the *Hizbul Mujahadeen* and Centre. The *Hizb* is demanding recognition of something which is so obvious. The *Hizb* wants India to say that there can be no 'final settlement' of the future of the State without talks with Pakistan. But this is obvious. No settlement can be 'final' unless it also settles the futures of that part of the State which has been captured by Pakistan, and that can be done only through talks with Pakistan. India has also recognised this, at Shimla in 1971 and at Lahore in 1998. This is a settled fact. The *Hizb* in the Indian side is more directly exposed to the desire of the people of the Valley for a respite from the killings (by whichever side) and is therefore more sincere in its desire for a cease-fire. The earlier cease-fire, announced by Majid Dar. was scuttled by Salahuddin and other leaders of the *Hizb* in Pakistan who arc engaged in Pakistan's games against India. The two sections agree in demanding that India must accept that Pakistan is a party to this dispute, but it is very likely that their reasons are different. Majid Dar and his colleagues could be demanding recognition of Pakistan as a part to the dispute so that they may have some gain in hand to justify a renewal of their initiative.

However, two things stand out. First, the *Hizb* in the Indian side continues to talk in favour of a cease-fire despite instructions to the contrary from the Salahuddin camp. Second. Pakistan has realised that far from gaining anything it has hurt itself in the eyes of the world, (including the US), and perhaps Kashmiri eyes too, by suppressing Dar's initiative.

One sad aspect of the entire exercise of talks on Kashmir was absence of any initiative to include the minorities of the Valley into the ambit of the purported dialogue. The ones who have lost everything in the valley have no stakes in the scheme of things or so it seems. This impression stems from the casual indifference displayed by the administration towards Kashmiri Pandits. During my recent trip to Jammu, I met a group of migrant Kashmiri Pandits. During the course of our discussion about the prevailing miserable plight of this community within the State, some pertinent questions were raised by them which we have listed as under:

- What was the total number of Kashmiri Pandit community in the Government Services at the time of migration in 1990'?
- What is their strength now in the service of J & K Government?
- What is the total number of recruitment made during the last 10 years and what is the percentage of Kashmiri Pandits in the State employment at present?
- What is the total number of retirements/deaths/VRS pertaining to Kashmiri Pandits during this period?

I had no ready answer or reply to give them except accepting my ignorance in the matter, which I admit. I told them that this magazine will take up this issue with the State Government. Having the right to get information, I only hope Farooq Abdullah's Government in its desperation, frustration and usual delaying tactics can not hide the information from the general public.

November, 2000

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Kashmiri Pandits migrated from the Valley in 1990 in the face of selective ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the militants. Ten years later, I wonder about the effects of their migration. How has this affected the Kashmiri Pandit community and how the community has come to grips with its forced exile. To some extent the migration has been beneficial to the Pandits. In the sense that their children are better placed in terms of education and employment. It is no surprise to find them in lucrative professions like engineering, banking and IT. But in retrospect, the biggest loser in this entire exercise has been the once thriving and vibrant Kashmiri culture. The signs of this cultural degeneration are very much palpable. The present generation is blissfully unaware of its glorious customs and traditions. A price that they have to pay for their nomadic existence. The nostalgics among the older generation of Pandits cherished a flickering hope that some day they would return to their paradise lost. A hope, which was exploited time and again by the politicians and powers that be. Now that hope is replaced by despair. They feel cheated and betrayed.

Speaking of ethnic cleansing, there is no doubt that terrorists were behind the murder of the State's prominent *Shia* leader, Agha Syed Mahdi who was killed recently. He was not the first *Shia* leader targeted by the terrorists; the former minister, Moulvi Iftikhar Hussain, had earlier survived an assassination attempt on June 2 this year. Moreover, the method—an Improvised Explosive Dcvice(IED) used for killing them was also used in killing the J &

K Power Minister. Ghulam Hassan Butt, on May 15. The only difference was that the blasts which killed Agha Syed Mahdi and Ghulam Hassan Butt occurred under the bullet-proof car they were travelling in. The blast meant to kill Moulvi Iftikhar Hussain occurred near the dais from which he was to address a *Shia Majlis.* Clearly, terrorists are now targeting *Shias* as a part of the same process of ethnic cleansing in which they had initially targeted Kashmiri Pandits and forced the bulk of them to flee the Valley. This in turn is not surprising. Pakistan has for a number of years now witnessed savage clashes between armed *Shia* and *Sunni* sectarian groups. The hostility between the two communities has also infected terrorist militias like the *Harkatul Mujahadeen* and *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* headquartered in Pakistan and raised by the ISI to carry on its proxy war against India. It is hardly a coincidence that the leadership of these organisations is *Sunni* and pathologically anti-*Shia.*

Apart from indicating that the anti-*Shia* bias of the terrorist militias is now taking its toll in India, such high-profile killings also have a strategic dimension to them. The new grid system of countering insurgency and the pro-active approach of the security forces in J & K is taking a severe toll of terrorists as many as 222 of them were shot in the Valley in September alone. One way of preventing the security forces from carrying out their pro-active approach would be to tie them down in ensuring the security of individuals and installations. Besides, murders of prominent people, which attract widespread attention, are also meant to boost the morale of the terrorists and create the impression that they continue to call the shots in J & K. The importance of such a message can hardly be over-emphasised at a time when the security forces have achieved remarkable success and terrorists coming across the border find themselves almost immediately under severe pressure.

Needless to say. such assassinations reflect, at one level. Pakistan's desperation. Not only have the security forces got the upper hand in Kashmir, it stands virtually isolated in the world on the issue of terrorism; the *Hizbul Mujaheedin* is riven by factional conflict. The local populations of several towns in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK) have of late demonstrated in the streets

demanding the immediate closure of terrorist training camps there and an end to the internecine clashes among the *jehadis*. But while Islamabad's desperation is understandable, murders like that of Agha Syed Mahdi only further alienate the Kashmiris, who have a powerful tradition of secularism, and who arc sick of violence. And since terrorism and insurgency cannot flourish without popular support, the writing on the wall is clear for Islamabad.

If Pakistan had ever any doubt that Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's announcement of an unilateral cease-fire in Jammu & Kashmir (J & K) was seriously meant, it should disappear following Advani's speech at Wagah on Sunday. It was. as the Union Home Minister pointed out addressing thousands of people from both countries, the Indian Prime Minister's second move for peace. The first was his journey to Lahore in 1999 through the Wagah border itself. Pointing out that Pakistan's failure to respond then had led to the Kargil war. he expressed the hope that Islamabad would not waste the present opportunity. It remains to be seen whether Pakistan, which has been so far been dismissive about the move, ultimately responds positively. In case it wants to know what such a responsc.should comprise, it has before it several steps mentioned by Advani at Wagah—cessation of all aid to J & K terrorists, destruction of the training camps for the latter, stoppage of the infiltration of terrorists into India, and putting an end to cross-border terrorism.

It would not be easy for Pakistan to do all this as that would mean acknowledging its involvement in activities, which it has all along denied being engaged in. Besides, sections of Pakistan's notoriously corrupt military establishment and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) have a stake in keeping cross-border terrorism alive. It enables them to handle vast amounts of money for which, as in all cases of under-cover operations, no accounts need to be rendered. Peace would mean the stanching of the flop not only of such money but also of the cut they receive of the proceeds from narcotic smuggling that helps to sustain cross-border terrorism. On their part, the commanders of the terrorist militias like the *Laslikar-e-Tayyeba* and *Harkatul Mujaheedin*, which Pakistan has raised, will, in the event of a cease-fire, lose not only the clout they now

have with the Pakistani Government but the huge amounts of money, arms, ammunition and supplies they receive. Therefore they will do everything possible to sabotage any peace process.

The question is whether Pakistan has either the will or the desire or both to deal firmly with them. The writing on the wall is clear. The mood in the Kashmir valley has changed decisively in favour of peace. This is clearly indicated by the response of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) which had declared the *Hizb-ul-Mujahadeen's* unilateral announcement of a cease-fire in July as "a decision in haste" but characterised Vajpayee's one as "reflecting a positive change in the attitude of the Government of India." Yaseen Malik, the chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, has described Vajpayee's move as a "bold initiative." The day is not far off when the people of J & K will cooperate extensively with the security forces in combating foreign terrorists. Once that happens. Pakistan's proxy war will be finally and decisively defeated. Its military junta should bow to the inevitable and eagerly grasp Vajpayee's offer if it has not taken leave of its senses altogether.

At a superficial level, the boldness of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's offer of a unilateral cease-fire in Kashmir for the duration of the Muslim holy month *Ramzan* may be partly underestimated because of the excessive—and perhaps unnecessary—hype over the wedding in a political family in Rawalpindi. But its import runs much deeper. The Prime Minister's initiative should help to put the options before the militant groups operating in the State in a clearer perspective. Ever since the *Hizb-ul-Mujahadeen's* offer of a cease-fire as a first step for paving the way for talks with New Delhi came a cropper earlier this year, there has been considerable confusion over what the insurgents have in mind. For a start, the Hizbul itself appeared to be in two minds over how far it was prepared to go so far as the negotiations were concerned.

Several of *Hijbul's* Valley-based leaders—who naturally are in closer touch with the situation on the ground—had seemed quite willing to initiate a dialogue with the Centre. On the other hand, its Pakistan-based leaders, including *Hizbul* Chief Syed Salahuddin. appeared to be engaged in a ventriloquist's act in following the

script prescribed by Islamabad. The Prime Minister's offer has a better chance of being appreciated by the Valley-based elements than those who operate from bases in Pakistan. The latter, in any case, may seek to attach conditions to their acceptance or find other ways of saying, 'no'. But the fact that the offer, to begin with, is linked with the Muslim holy month must make it difficult for them to reject it out-of-hand.

In the circumstances, it is quite likely that some of the groups may go along with the cease-fire offer while others will turn it down on some pretext or the other. That might be one way for the militants to keep their options open. But the fact remains that there is a growing section of people in the Valley who are sick today of the continuing violence and fervently wish for peace. It is this section which will discern a ray of light in the Prime Minister's offer. Although this initiative represents no more than a small step on the long road to peace in Kashmir, it is nevertheless a step that carries the possibility of gradually overcoming the many hurdles that lie ahead.

The killing of innocent civilians by the Kashmiri militant groups following Atal Behari Vajpayee's unilateral cease-fire offer provides some idea of the confusion which has gripped these outfits. Whether it was the murder of five truck drivers on the Jammu-Srinagar highway or of another five in Jammu's remote Doda region, the victims were all unarmed civilians belonging to the minority community. The objective of what the insurgents were seeking to achieve through these massacres remains totally beyond comprehension. Perhaps all that they wanted was to give the impression that they would do their damnedest to subvert the proposed cease-fire even when it covered the holy month of Ramzan.

It is clear that the killers were looking for soft targets. The choice of truck drivers as victims suggests that they must have been desperately wanting to perpetrate an act of terror, which would attract attention. The fact that the fanatical groups such as the *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba*. which are believed to be responsible for these killings, arc directly controlled by their masters in Pakistan makes

them less responsive to the local sensitivities. Thus, even when the All Party *Hurriyat* Conference and its militant appendages, including the *Hizb-ul-Mujahadeen*. have voiced conditionally conciliatory responses to the cease-fire proposal, some of the groups can still be expected to keep violating it with a view to provoking the security forces and then blaming them for the violations.

There is a lesson in this gory episode. For a start, the cease-fire offer has put the Pakistani credibility to test. If more such incidents occur, Islamabad will have a trying.time explaining its role to the world. Pakistani rulers and the militant groups controlled by them have been trying to sound somewhat conciliatory to the extent that the Pakistani Foreign Minister has accepted some responsibility in checking trans-border terrorism. This denotes the pressure of international opinion. There is little doubt that world opinion is turning against them. This will make Pakistan, and the militants, realise the need for restraint. Whether they will act accordingly is still uncertain. The reason is that both are afraid of peace breaking out in Kashmir, for that will mean the end of all that they had striven for with their acts of terrorism for more than a decade.

December, 2000

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Pakistan's response to India's unilateral cease-fire in Jammu & Kashmir (J & K) suggests that its policy-makers believe that they can take their Indian counterparts as well as South Asia experts in other countries for a ride. Otherwise why would they try to draw a red herring which would appear, and immediately, in its true colours even to a layman. A person with even a casual acquaintance with the violence in J & K and the troubled relations between India and Pakistan knows, the real cause of both does not lie in clashes along the international border between the two countries and the Line of Control (LoC) in J & K. It lies in Islamabad's sponsorship of cross-border terrorism against India through the raising of fundamentalist Islamic militias like the *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* and *Harkat-ul-Mujahadeen* and the despatch of their cadres into this country for unleashing violence and subversion. Clashes along the international border and LoC arise mainly because of the Pakistani Army's shelling and other diversionary tactics to help the terrorists to cross over. Hence Pakistan's statement that it has asked its troops to exercise "maximum restraint" along the LoC is unlikely to help matters to any great extent. This is because a scaling down of the level of its shelling does not automatically mean the end of cross-border terrorism. The level of infiltration always comes down during winter when the passes become snow-bound. Islamabad may well have thought that the low-level of winter infiltration can continue despite a reduction in shelling. Besides, even if it reduces the number of terrorists crossing over in J & K, it can keep on sending

them across India's highly porous borders with Nepal and Bangladesh, both of which have become centres of intense activity by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) which is conducting the proxy war.

It is possible that Pakistan has used coded language and that exercise of "maximum restraint" really means that it has decided to suspend cross-border terrorism. It cannot publicly say it has done so because it has always denied involvement in it. In that case, events alone will reveal its true intentions

Leaving aside the question whether Pakistan's latest position means that its earlier conduct at the LoC was unrestrained, what is immediately clear is that there is a realisation in Islamabad that its present game plan, in which its Kargil misadventure was a key element, had led to a dead end. First, Pakistan was uncertain whether the varying responses by the different groups of militants to the Indian gesture would not lead to a rupture in their ranks. Such a development would mean that Pakistan's decade-long proxy war in Kashmir will come to a messy end, especially if its foreign mercenaries are evicted from the state. Secondly, Pakistan must have also become aware of its increasing diplomatic isolation because of the refusal of the terrorist groups based on its territory to respond to the peace initiatives.

It is too early to say anything hopeful at the moment because Pakistan has invested far too heavily in terms of arming and training the terrorists, apart from infusing them with a sense of *jehad*, to beat a retreat now. But, undeniably, the Indian insistence on a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir problem, evident in Prime Minister's Lahore trip and in the offer of cease-fire, is seemingly at last bearing fruit. International pressure on Pakistan and war-weariness in Kashmir may have played a part. But credit for the latest turn of events must go to the remarkably restrained role that India had played during Kargil conflict and afterwards.

The *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* Chief, Hafeez Muhammad Sayed, had claimed during the militia's annual itjema (congregation) at Muridke near Lahore in November last year, that his fighters could strike even at Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's office in New

Delhi. Last month, one of its suicide (*fidayeen*} squads attacked the headquarters of the 7th Rajputana Rifles inside Delhi's Red Fort, killing two army personnel and injuring one. Though this was not the same thing as striking at the Prime Minister's office, it was bad enough. The significance of such attacks—labelled "grand gestures" in the terminology of guerrilla and terrorist campaigns—lies not in the damage they cause but in their psychological impact. From the point of view of organisations like the *Lashkar*, this is important in the context of preventing the current cease-fire from deepening the desire for peace in Kashmir whose people are fed up with continuing strife and reviving their flagging zeal for violence by portraying victory as inevitable and round the corner. The historic Red Fort, whose symbolic importance as India's invincible *bastion* requires no exaggeration, was clearly chosen as a target to achieve the maximum impact. While a single act like this may not have any such effect, a serious view needs to be taken of the fact that the *Lashkar's fidayeen* squad not only breached the security arrangements to mount the attack but managed to escape despite the Army's and Delhi police's attempts to capture them. One hopes that the court of inquiry which has been ordered into the incident will establish what went wrong and prescribe corrective measures.

Red Fort's incident once again underlines the perfidious nature of Pakistan's response to the cease-fire India has unilaterally implemented since the beginning of the month of Ramzan. Clearly, it has resorted to gestures like scaling down the intensity of firing along the Line of Control and ordering partial withdrawal of troops from it, to confuse international opinion. These mean nothing. Most of its cantonments are close to the LoC and troops can be moved forward in a short time. Besides, a partial withdrawal will spare it the trouble of maintaining troops at high altitudes in freezing conditions. The real issue is cross-border terrorism and Islamabad's leashing of organisations like the *Lashkar*. As Red Fort's incidence underlined, very little has been done in either matter. The conclusion is irresistible that while maintaining a facade of reasonableness, the junta in Islamabad has egged on the *Lashkar* and other creations of its Inter-Services Intelligence to create conditions, which will force India out of its self-imposed restraint.

Islamabad's shenanigans notwithstanding, the sentiments expressed in Kashmir against the foreign *jehadis* do acquire a strategic importance in the overall context of militancy in Kashmir. It is not only *Hurriyat* leaders like Abdul Ghani Lone who have spoken against any non-Kashmiri being involved in the militancy, the JKLF based in Pakistan has also echoed such views. True, the fact that there are still pro-Pakistani elements in Kashmir was evident from the clashes that took place between them and their more independent-minded opponents after a recent conference of *Hurriyat* leaders in Srinagar. But what is obvious is that rifts have appeared among the subversives as a result of the Vajpayee Government's unilateral gesture. Undeniably, the growing desire for peace among the ordinary people of the Valley must have emboldened those in the ranks of the insurgents who are against foreign involvement. Predictably, not only did a section of the insurgents angrily reject the proposal but even stepped up their acts of depredation to show that they had no time for such measures which they perceived to be a cynical ploy. Understandably, this intemperate reaction was voiced by the militants based in Islamabad rather than by those in the Valley. Because local militants are obviously more aware of the feelings in favour of peace at the grassroots level in Kashmir therefore they would ill-afford to spurn the peace offer.

January, 2001

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True to its flip and flop policy the Indian Government sprang a surprise on the nation in May last by announcing the withdrawal of unilateral cease-fire in Kashmir and the intention of inviting Pakistan to a summit meeting. While there was a general view in political circles that the cease-fire would be extended yet nobody could visualise that General Pervez Musharraf would be invited for summit so soon. This was particularly so when only a few days earlier the prospect of a dialogue was rejected as Pakistan continued to support and assist terrorism in Kashmir. The reasons of this *volte-face* are not clear. No explanations have been offered. It looked ironic that India should be prepared to talk to a General who deliberately absented during the Lahore bus ride of Atal Behari Vajpayee and was the main author of the Kargil operations. Infact, Indian Government had gone to the extent of absolving Nawaz Sharif of any complicity in the Kargil conflict. The nation needs to know what has prompted this sudden urge for talks and what changes have occurred in the meantime to warrant such a move?

Nevertheless, the Nation, at large has welcomed these talks as everyone is aware that peace between India and Pakistan is in the best interests of both countries. Not all the summits are free from danger of failure but one cannot overlook the unique opportunities the present one offers. The euphoria generated by the Shimla Accord did not last long as the subsequent events in Pakistan, including Army take-over, changed the whole complexion. Any verbal assurances held by Bhutto on Kashmir disappeared with his down

fall and his subsequent death at the gallows. The Lahore Summit, which seemed to have been hastily organised without sufficient preparedness, was overshadowed by the Kargil adventure. The Lahore Declaration came to a naught. We should not forget that this summit is being held in the backdrop of the failure of Shimla Accord and Lahore Declaration. We are once again face to face with a military regime with no popular mandate. As Benazir Bhutto put it:

to help poverty which is dogging both the nations.

While Kashmir may be a 'core' issue for Pakistan, it is — as Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh has said—the core of 'Indian nationhood'. A peaceful resolution of the Kashmir tangle will unleash tremendous forces for overall development of the sub-continent. Let Kashmir not overshadow the summit. There are many other matters to be resolved to the benefit of the two countries. The most important pre-requisite is to end all forms of cross-border terrorism. If General Musharraf refuses or pleads inability to do so then it would be clear that he is not in full control of the situation and, therefore, not fully mandated to carry on the dialogue. Vajpayee cannot be expected to bale him out.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the imminence of the Summit has pushed into background the K.C. Pant dialogue. Except for an 'informal' meeting with one important Kashmir leader Shabir Shah, Pant has not met any worthwhile leaders so far. Meeting highly irrelevant leaders like G.M. Shah is not of much consequence. The *Hurriyat* Conference has got itself entangled into a web of its own making. On the one hand they were demanding from house tops an unconditional dialogue and when the same was offered they dithered. Their insistence on including Pakistan in the dialogue was simply a ruse to avoid the talks to prevent their exposure before the people of Kashmir. Even Pakistan which initially raised a faint cry for including *Hurriyat* in the talks at the summit have, now, conveniently dropped this issue. *Hurriyat* Conference is becoming more and more irrelevant. Recent developments within the conglomerate have highlighted sharp difference within its leadership. Yet another factor we have to contend with is Farooq Abdullah, the wayward Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. Having failed to provide an effective and corruption-free government, which was his primary responsibility, he, to assert his relevance in the scheme of things, shot off an Assembly resolution on autonomy. He has neither the stature nor the popularity of his illustrious father, Sheikh Abdullah, to play any effective part in Indo-Pak talks. One cannot forget that it was because of his tall standing that Nehru sent Sheikh Abdullah to meet Ayub Khan (in May 1964) in an effort to solve the Kashmir dispute.

Kashmiris look up to the proposed summit with lots of hope. They pine for peace and an atmosphere which permits them to progress and prosper.

July, 2001

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Peer Giyas-ud-din, ex-J & K Minister, Senior Congressman and lastly in National Conference, passed away on August 17, 2001. A core nationalised by heart, secular by conviction and of the Marxist's view did not waiver in his convictions during the worst period of militancy even at the cost of expediency. Possessed of a compelling personality and a scintillating mind, Peer *saheb* was a source of inspiration to many youths including myself. A highly evolved soul he had a deep understanding of the human life and social interaction. Though profusely influenced by the Marxist ideology he did not even for once, overlook the importance of humanism. He evinced deep concern for the downtrodden and did not hesitate to take on the privileged few who, he thought, were greatly responsible for their misery. Peer *saheb* was an ideologue for whom the progress of man was centric to human welfare.

He rejoined politics at the age of 17, influenced by the "progressive theory of Marxism." In 1942 under the aegis of All-India Trade Union Congress, Peer *saheb* became the General Secretary of the student union in the State. G M. Sadiq, with whom Peer had a long-standing love-hate relationship, was the President.

An ardent freedom fighter he rubbed shoulders with such leaders as Sheikh Abdullah, Bakshi Ghulam Mohd and J.M. Sadiq. He took active interest in student movement and took upon himself the task of educating the youth on political, social and economic affairs. He was immensely successful in removing the dross from the minds of the young whom he consciously trained to be better

leaders. An avid reader, a sympathetic comrade and a benign teacher, Peer Giyas-ud-din never once compromised with his principles.

Peer, a born rebel was in fall out with his mentors and friends alike. "These clashes," he would say, "were the outcome of my strong feelings against injustice and failure on the part of the government to ameliorate the lot of the down-trodden."

A secularist to the core he held that religion had no place in politics. It is a tribute to him that the events of last decade or so in the J & K had not made him change his basic principles.

In 1953, Peer *saheb* quit politics. The next year he took up a government job, principal of an extension training centre. He resigned after four years and rejoined politics to become the Deputy Chairman of the Legislative Council, a post he held till 1963. He was then included in the Shams-ud-din's. Cabinet; He resigned in 1970 following differences with Sadiq sahib.

In 1971 Giyas-ud-din became the senior Vice-President of the PCC(I) and continued to be the enfant terrible of state politics. He clashed with Congressmen who opposed the Sheikh-Indira Gandhi accord. In 1983. He joined issue with the party bosses for installing G. M. Shah as the Chief Minister.

He continued to oppose violence particularly if it was mixed with religion. He shone like a beacon light in the present dark times in Kashmir.

As a person I saw in him qualities of the head and the heart beautifully blended. He was easily accessible and never resented a help or assistance. A man of high personal integrity, he never allowed the razzle of office to overwhelm him. Throughout, he remained, essentially a human being with lot of humility, love and understanding. It was for these qualities that even his worst political opponents respected him. Though not known much outside the J & K State, Peer Giyas-ud-din marched like a colossus on the local political scene. Though a teacher of some standing he remained a student ever eager to learn. He was a great reader and his knowledge of the world was phenomenal. He was also a writer of standing and

has written a lot on Kashmir.

An agnostic by belief, yet it was a significant coincidence that he breathed his last on August 17, 2001 at 4.30 a.m. when the first *Azan* of the day which happened to be Friday was being made. It is considered very auspicious by Muslims.

I remember Peer *saheb* as a father figure who always indulged me. In all my moments of despondency, I would repair to him and always I would come out solaced with a positive frame of mind. Secular forces in the state definitely feel orphaned with his passing away but then realise that his teachings are still with us. It is difficult to forget Peer Giyas-ud-din but then his principles are still alive. It is with these values that he shall remain immortal.

During his lifetime Peer *saheb* did not get the recognition he deserved for his conviction, understanding and outlook for the issues. It is for the government of India and Jammu & Kashmir government to award him posthumously with Padam Shri or equally coveted award so that the people of Kashmir feel that the virtues, loyality and patriotism is also recognised.

May God grant strength to his family and innumerable disciples to bear this irreparable loss.

September, 2001

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In recent times Afghanistan seemed to be witnessing 1996 in reverse. Taliban then had swept to power in this country in a matter of weeks, creating in their wake a heady mix of myths and folklore about their courage and daredevilry. Cut back to 2001, their famed reputation of fighting capabilities lies in tatters. Taliban forces are on the run, leaving behind the rotting corpses of their dead comrades and bombed out war machines. The morale of their troops is down to their ankles. The sudden capitulation of Taliban has left Pakistan's President, Pervez Musharraf with a metaphorical bloody nose. Because since the start of the military campaign in Afghanistan, he was conveying to the western leaders Pakistan's concerns about the Northern Alliance getting upper hand in Kabul. Now with the latter, back in Kabul, Musharraf is caught between the devil and the deep sea. as he has to explain his inability to address Pakistan's concerns.

Taliban may have fallen, but realistically speaking, the battle to stamp out terrorism is far from over. The US led military campaign in Afghanistan represents barely half of the required international counter terror efforts in this part of the world. The other half of the requisite effort should be to achieve by political means in Taliban's cradle—Pakistan—what militarily is being sought to be accomplished in Afghanistan. Unless the state run terrorist complex is dismantled, only then the security of the West and India can be safeguarded from the spreading cancer of *jehad*. The anti-terror campaign has to cleanse Pakistan of Taliban type of culture.

Eliminating Mullah Omar, Osama bin Laden and other Al Qaeda figures cannot bring an enduring success as long as 4,000 *madarsas* in Pakistan continue to mass-produce *jehadis*. Also, the bankrolling states for these seminaries namely Saudi Arabia, UAE and other oil rich sheikhdoms, must be brought into the ambit of the anti-terror campaign.

Durable success also demands that the United States heed to the most important lesson from the past mistakes—the need to keep focus on the long-term goals and not to be carried away by political expediency and narrow military objectives. By focussing on immediate goals in past, US policy planners ended up creating monsters that have come to haunt the security of secular, democratic states. The Reagen Doctrine of 1980s allowed arming of anti-Communist 'freedom fighters' in places such as Afghanistan. Nicaragua. Angola and Cambodia. Pakistan used its participation in the covert US operations not so much to rout the Soviet forces in Afghanistan as to strengthen its military position against India. and also to favour Afghan guerilla groups based in Peshawar such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizbul Islami, rather than assist groups engaged in combat inside Afghanistan. Pakistan could push its own agenda because US accepted its condition that IS1 control the weapons flow and select the arms recipients. According to knowledgeable sources, IS1 siphoned off an estimated fifty per cent of such military aid, with the weapons coming handy to ignite insurgency in Kashmir from 1989. Barely thirty per cent of the supplied aid reached the Afghan guerillas.

US weapons and other aid created the Frankensteins that have come to haunt regional and international security. Hekmatyar. fattened by the ISI at the expense of US taxpayers, was responsible more than anyone else in blocking a peaceful transition to post-Soviet rule in Afghanistan. The CIA during the Afghan war unsuspectingly endorsed another Frankenstein—Bin Laden. Few of us remember the White House ceremony attended by some bearded and turbaned Afghan guerillas in the mid-1980s where Reagen proclaimed *mujahadeen* such as Bin Laden to be the 'moral equivalent of the founding fathers' of United States.

If there is anything surprising about the United States' decision to ban the *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* and *Jaish-e-Mohammed*, it is that it did not come earlier. For years, New Delhi has been presenting to Washington, overwhelming evidence of groups such as these and others in cross border terrorism sponsored by Pakistan as part of its proxy war with India. Even after the September 11 bombings, which prompted the United States to put containment of terrorism at the top of its agenda, action against Pakistan based terrorist organizations was tardy in coming. While action was taken relatively early against *Harkat-ul-Mujahadeen*, JeM's funds were frozen only in October following the discovery that Syed Omar Sheikh, the man who had sent $100,000 to Mohammad Atta one of the principal suspects in the World Trade Center attacks, was founder of the organization along with Maulana Masood Azhar. Both of them, along with a third prisoner, had to be released from the Indian jails following hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC-814 to Kandahar. Both of them enjoyed very close proximity to the sacked ISI Chief. Lt.Gen. Mehmood Ahmed, who had helped them to set up the JeM, with funds reportedly from Osama bin Laden. Meanwhile. US's step demolishes Pakistan's claim that terrorists active in Kashmir are indigenous freedom fighters.

For all his bluster and blandishment, Osama bin Laden continues to be an exclusive customer for preying US forces. But even in his cat and mouse game with America, Laden continues to come up with some bravado or the other. The latest one was a video-taped message broadcast over Qatar's *Al-Jajeera* television network sometime back. In his characteristic style the fugitive warlord raised the issue of Kashmir. Where he said, "our brethren have been slaughtered," for 50 years. Whether it was another salvo to raise the flagging morale of his beleaguered comrades, is beside the point. But the fact remains that his Al-Qaeda network features regularly in the interrogations of mercenaries captured in Kashmir. Nevertheless, by all accounts the fighting capabilities of his men are severely degraded, what with ferocious battering doled out by US forces. So it would not be surprising if he is turned over by some dollar hungry informant, in some remote corner of Afghanistan or in the rugged terrain of NWFP in Pakistan. There are credible reports

that Osama may be hiding in Pakistan. An Afghan drug dealer arrested in India provided this startling clue. According to him Osama may be hiding in the mountain town of Dir, some 180-km northwest of Peshawar. There arc other pointers too. In early November, Osama met Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir at a secret hideout. Mir said he was driven blindfolded for some five hours from Kabul. A good road from Jalalabad via Asadabad. Zar Bairul, through the Nama pass to Bairul Bandian, connects the region north of Dir. The road was developed to facilitate the movement of opium. Bin Laden is familiar with the region since Jalalabad hosted some of his more important camps. Bin Laden's reasons for seeking refuge in Pakistan are obvious. He will be immune to American bombers and Special Forces.

The Talban's humiliating defeat seems to have knocked some sense into the minds of Kashmiri militants. As much is evident from the *Hijbul Mujahadeen's* denial of any links with the *Al-Qaeda*. or the Taliban and its announcement that the foreign militants will have no role in policy matters in Kashmir. The trouble with these observations is that, first, they have come rather late in the day and, secondly, it isn't clear whether they can be taken seriously. It goes without saying that these seemingly placatory noises are being made under pressure. They are not born of conviction, but necessity. If September 11 had not happened, the Hizb would have felt no need to deny its links with Taliban. Nor would it have ruled out any role for mercenaries who arc still being described as 'our guests". Given these factors, it is doubtful whether there is any need to respond to these belated signs of reasonableness. Such misgivings are also bound to persist considering that only some time back, the *Lashkar-c-Tayyeba* had ambushed an army convoy in Kashmir. The statement by Hizb spokesman, therefore, that "we accept that gun alone is no solution to the problem" is hardly credible. The fact remains that organizations such as *Hizb* and even *Hurriyat* are really creatures of Pakistan. Not only that, they have had close links with the entire *jehadi* network which functioned from Pakistan and Afghanistan with sole purpose of conducting holy war in Kashmir, Chechnya and elsewhere. There is nothing yet to show that the sinister network has ceased to exist or that it will not be revived by

Pakistan and *jehadis* after their present difficulties are over.

For all talk of the militancy being purely indigenous, there is little doubt that *Hizb* and *Hurriyat* still look to Pakistan for inspiration and material support. It is not only that leaders from their ranks travel to Pakistan lo kiss its soil, but clearly they invariably endorse the Pakistani line of implementing the UN resolutions or involving Islamabad in negotiations. If the movement is genuinely indigenous, what is the need for involving Pakistan, except at a very late stage when the question of the PoK's future is discussed9 For the present, therefore, the overtures of the *Hizb* and the *Hurriyat* can safely be ignored,. The need for biding time is all the more advisable because as the situation in Afghanistan sorts itself out, much of the Kashmir's problems, too. especially its *jehadi* components will solve itself.

The initiative taken by India to revive its contacts with Afghanistan may well mark a more hopeful phase in mutual relations. However, we must remember that Indian influence in Afghanistan extends well beyond the formal diplomatic field to the social, political and cultural arenas. As Afghanistan breaks away from the medieval stranglehold of Taliban, there is little doubt to which country its common people will turn to find a suitable model. It cannot be Pakistan, where the tradition of military rule has been compounded by the drugs and Kalashnikov culture bred by the two decades of turbulence in Afghanistan. Iran, too, is a country where the *mullahs* prevail, making it only half a democracy. It is only India, the second largest Muslim country in the world, which is evidently the closest to Afghanistan in terms of mental proximity. Yet, the influence India may well exert has to be unobtrusive, so as to provide succour to the country devastated by the machinations of a cynical Pakistan, which only wanted Afghanistan to give it strategic depth against India.

On hindsight, the Taliban's nemesis is the first step in the war against terrorism. Terrorism can be effectively contained only by strengthening the current international consensus and by inculcating the values the West stands for. Without sounding sceptic I may add that till recently terrorists in Kashmir were freedom fighters for

some. And terrorism in the Valley seemed. quite innocuous to warrant any serious thought. Now at least there is serious talk of tackling terrorism at global level, going by the statements of US authorities. This difference of perceptions is the breeding ground of extremism. Therefore an all-encompassing approach based on the security concerns of all the countries from India to Peru, would be the right *mantra* to fight and contain terrorism. Terrorism not only threatens the free, secular world but also springs from rejection of democracy and secularism. Democratic societies can never give birth to Talibans.

December, 2001

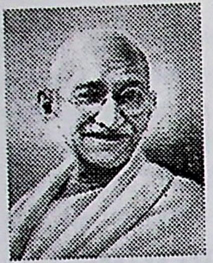
INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURS



With free India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, keeping the External Affairs under his personal charge, nation's foreign affairs received a high priority. The first important decision was to continue the membership of the Commonwealth even after India became a republic. This set off a new trend in the Commonwealth. More decolonised free countries joined it. Probably because Britain was a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council and also its closeness to the US. India was not keen to snap its lies with Britain. There have, however, been many who questioned this linkage with the Commonwealth. They could not perceive its logic particularly in the context of a definite anti-India tilt adopted by the Anglo-US block especially in respect of India's position on Kashmir. Krishna Menon pooh poohed the Commonwealth by remarking, "There is nothing common in Commonwealth, least of all the wealth." The fact, however, remains that Commonwealth did bring to bear some influence on situations like unilateral declaration of Independence by Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and apartheid in South Africa, In sum total one can say that membership of this club brought no harm to India. With more and more non-white nations joining it, the British ability to manoeuvre it has been considerably diluted.



It is in respect to its relations with the immediate neighbours that India has not been able to evolve a consistent policy in keeping with its size and potential. Infact, it would not



be wrong to say that our relations with our neighbours like Pakistan. Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and even Bhutan arc not smooth. There is an element of suspicion lurking in the



minds of our neighbours about our intentions. The level of sensitvity is so high that even a sincere friendly advice is taken askance. Recent events in Nepal and Bangladesh are (here for all to see. Unfounded remarks of a matinee idol about Nepal and its people were blown up resulting into a well-orchestrated movement against India. Similarly, the Bangladesh Rifles exploited a localised border skirmish lo launch well-planned action of brutally killing sixteen BSF men. Sri Lanka is always wary of Indian intentions. Sometimes the feelings are allowed lo run so high that in a formal ceremonial parade at Colombo airport a Sri Lankan soldier tried to rifle-butt our late Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. Myanmar does not have much direct links with us yet it does not hesitate to provide secure havens for secessionists and terrorists from The north-east. The tenuousness of our relations with our neighbours arc being cleverly exploited by our main neighbour, Pakistan. Reports galore about ISI activities in Bangladesh, Nepal and even in Bhutan.

Pakistan is a different case. Observers, infact, believe that it is at the core of India's problems with its neighbours. It is an unfortunate fact that our foreign policy in the region is more reactive than pro-active. Any event in the sub-continent, at once, scurries us into a defensive mode. What greater tribute can be paid lo Pakistan's policy-makers than that for any adverse event in India like terrorist attacks, explosions, sabotage and subversions, we rest content with accusing the ISI. We believe that by naming the ISI we have wished away all future adverse events. Can a greater insolvency of a foreign policy be imagined?

By and large, India's freedom struggle was a peaceful movement based on *satyagrahs,* fasts, *bundhs,* strikes, marches, boycotts, public meetings and public processions. Thousands of

freedom fighters courted arrests and most of the leaders were in and out of jails. Up to early thirties the Indian National Congress provided the leadership of the freedom struggle with Mahatma Gandhi emerging as the focal point. The British Administration, shaken at the rise of mass movements, launched its well known policy of divide and rule. The only way they could do it was to inject the virus of communalism into the struggle. Muslims were encouraged to sue for separate electorate on the plea that they were a different nation. Some Muslim leaders, notable among whom was Mohammed Ali Jinnah, launched the Muslim League as an organisation to represent and safeguard the interests of Indian Muslims. The Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, tried its best to reason out with Jinnah and his henchmen that only a secular and united India should be their objective. Jinnah and the Muslim League would have none of it and they continued to harp on the two-nation theory. They termed Indian National Congress as Hindu party representing only the Hindu interests. This gave rise to the idea of Pakistan which was relentlessly pursued with the covert and overt support of the British. the events leading to the partition of India are too well known to be repeated here. The fact, however, remains that India's freedom struggle which had remained by and large, peaceful was at the very end drenched in blood and strife. Thousands of people were brutally killed in communal carnage that gripped Punjab and Bengal. Lakhs were uprooted and forced to trudge to their 'dream country'. It was in the background of this grim human tragedy that India awoke to freedom on August 15, 1947. This was not the tryst we wanted with our destiny. The fact, however, was that we were faced with reality of a theocratic Pakistan and a secular India. Pakistan was created because Muslim League believed in two-nation theory and India had squarely



rejected it. What was very significant was that more Muslims chose to remain in India than those who went to Pakistan. Ironically, the main thrust of the two-nation theory came from what is called the Aligarh University group yet most of the Muslims in Uttar Pradesh, consciously stayed back in India and chose lo align their destiny with the rest of countrymen.

Thus on August 15, 1947, India emerged as independent nation committed; to secularism upholding of fundamental rights of all citizens irrespective of religion, caste and creed, a democratic polity ensuring universal adult sufferage and the rule of law. The fledging new nation was still finding its feet when news came of Pakistan sponsored raiders invading Jammu and Kashmir, which kid till then sought for a stand-still agreement with had both India and Pakistan before it decides about its future. Ironically, while India had yet to decide on the stand-still agreement the attack came. The Maharaja had ultimately sought Indian help to throw away the raiders and towards that direction he signed the Instrument of Accession with India on October 26, 1947. India was quick to respond by sending its armed forces right from the next day (October 27, 1947). The timely arrival of the Indian Army saved the capitulation of Srinagar and its airport. Within a few days of their landing the Indian troops accosted regular Pakistani troops and had to resort to regular warfare with them. Pakistan had all along been claiming that they had nothing to do with tribal raiders. Notwithstanding all this, Indian forces covered themselves with glory and managed to push back Pakistan Army beyond the town of Uri, thus liberating most of the Kashmir Valley.

The Kashmir conflict provided the first opportunity for India to determine its foreign policy *vis-à-vis* Pakistan. Unfortunately. India dithered and chose to approach the United Nations on January 1, 1948. under Chapter VI of the Charter as "India was anxious to avoid a direct conflict with Pakistan." Were they not already involved in a direct conflict with regular Pakistani troops? The complaint, further, requested the Security Council lo ask the Government of Pakistan:—

"(1) to prevent Pakistan Government personnel, military and

civil, participating in or assisting the invasion of Jammu and Kashmir State;

(2) to call upon other Pakistani nationals to desist from taking any part in the fighting in Jammu and Kashmir State;

(3) to deny to the invaders: (a) access to and use of its territory for operations against Kashmir; (b) military and other supplies: and (c) all other kinds of aid that might tend to prolong the present struggle."

And what did the Security Council say in its Resolution dated January 17,1948, calling upon both Pakistan and India:

(i) to take immediately all measures within their power (including public appeals to their people calculated to improve the situation and to refrain from making any statement and from doing or causing to be done or permitting any act which might aggravate the situation; and

(ii) to inform the Security Council immediately of any material change in the situation which occurs or appears to either of them to be about to occur while the mailer is under consideration by the council and consult with the Council thereon."

The logic of approaching the United Nations when our troops were maintaining a steady progress in pushing out the enemy invaders and looked confident enough to clear the State of them, is not understood. It was also well known that Anglo-American block was favouring Pakistan and that it would manoeuvre the Security Council against Indian interests, which it did. Moreover, the text of the complaint to the Security Council was so ill-drafted that it almost accepted that Pakistan has no direct involvement in the Kashmir conflict. What kind of policy bankruptcy was this? India could have been more direct and forthright particularly when the most popular State leader, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, and his organisation, the National Conference, were solidly behind it. Somehow, the Indian leadership under Jawaharlal Nehru, who was also the country's foreign minister, were inhibited by the Muslim majority character of the Jammu and Kashmir State and Pakistan claiming it on that basis. Infact, Kashmir's Muslim character should

have provided an excellent opportunity lo India to effectively assert its secularism and democratic professions. The initial initiative was unfortunately lost just because we had not formulated a cogent policy to deal with Pakistan. Always we were thrown on the defensive.

This trend has continued ever since. The syndrome of "'*Pakistan Kya Kahega*" has gripped the foreign office. This has greatly inhibited our attitude towards Indian Muslims whom over the years, leadership sought to perpetuate their exclusiveness by using them only as vote-banks. No effective secular Muslim leadership was allowed to emerge. Though we had rejected the two-nation theory yet there have been crude attempts at reminding the Muslims that they are a different class because of their religion. This has unfortunately, led to some sections of Muslims being branded as anti-national. This was an eminently avoidable situation if only we had a clear policy both on domestic and external fronts. Ironically, Kashmir affairs were dealt with by the External Affairs Ministry directly under Jawaharlal Nehru while all other state's affairs were dealt with by the State's ministry under the great Sardar Patel. Is is too well known how Sardar Patel solved the problem of princely states particularly of Junagarh and Hyderabad. It is also a fact that it was Sardar Patel who humbled the Ranas of Nepal and ensured the return to the thrown of King Tribhuvan.

It would be worthwhile to recall some of the important highlights of Indo-Pak relations:-

(1) September/October 1947: tribal raiders trained and led by Pakistan Army officers attack Kashmir. The small Kashmir Army could offer only a people's defence particularly when the Muslim elements within it were won over on religious grounds. Most of the Muslim elements in Kashmir army were non-Kashmiri speaking. Indian Army which flew in to fight the raiders soon found themselves accosted by regular Pakistan Army units. Kashmiris under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah resisted the tribal attack and provided great service to Indian troops as guides and facilitators of intelligence. Indian troops were able to successfully push away the invaders and were well on their way to throw them out of the

State. Just when the heat was on the Government of India agreed to a cease-fire on .January 1, 1949. This was obviously under the pressure of the Anglo-US block in the Security Council. Though India was aware that, as per words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "The nations of the world sitting on that body got lost in power politics" yet it was a failure of India's foreign policy that we accepted Pakistan, the aggressor, as an equal and interested party. Pakistan had thus, achieved its objective and has since been hammering it. This is despite the U.N. Security Council having resolved to ask Pakistan lo withdraw from occupied areas of J & K. Holding of any plebiscite, as envisaged by the U.N. Security Council, was subject lo the condition of Pakistan withdrawing from the entire J & K. This has not happened.

(2) August 1965: Pakistan sponsors armed infiltration into Jammu and Kashmir. For the first time India asserts that any attack in J & K is an attack on India and Indian troops arc ordered to open another regular front on Amritsar-Lahore sector. This had the desired effect and Pakistan sued for peace. In the meantime Indian Army had completely neutralized the armed infiltration into Kashmir Valley. Our foreign policy floundered further at the Tashkent Peace talks (Jan 1966) which was brokered by the then Soviet Union, while agreeing to a cease-fire, India strangely agreed lo return to Pakistan the areas her troops had captured in PoK particularly, the well known Haji Pir Pass. This happened despite India having cried hoarse that whole of J & K belonged to her. Yet again Pakistan was let off despite its aggression. What more could have Pakistan bargained for under the circumstances. Soon it reverted to its virile anti-India propaganda with its Foreign Minister, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, talking of a "thousand years war with India."

(3) 1971: Following national elections in Pakistan, the military rulers there refused to recognise Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman as the leader of the nation although his Awami League Party had obtained an absolute majority in the National Assembly. Internal strife continued and the General Yahya Khan regime unleashed a reign of terror on East Pakistan. The east Pakistanis rose in revolt against the Pak Army crackdown. Millions of east Pakistanis crossed over to India to seek refuge. An armed resistance called *Mukti Bahini* was

set up which gave the Army a harrowing time. For the first time in India's history there was total fusion, of national and international interest and. Indian Army went to the rescue of the East Pakistanis. Indian Army in close coordination with the *Mukti Bahini* forced the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan lo surrender. Though Pakistan tried to open the western front also but it was effectively rebutted. This led to the division of Pakistan with Hast Pakistan declaring itself as a free nation under the name of Bangladesh. India declared an unilateral cease-fire which Pakistan had no choice but to accept. The result was India took the entire Pak Army in East Pakistan (more than 90,000) as prisoners-of-war and was also in possession of small pockets of Pakistan territory in West Pakistan. Then followed the famous Shimla Summit between. Indira Gandhi and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. The Shimla Agreement that resulted from the Summit had, besides re-designating the cease-fire line in. J & K as Line of Control, in it many pious wishes like both countries will not resort to armed conflict to solve their problems and that all disputes/ conflicts will be solved by bi-lateral negotiations. The Indian foreign policy floundered once more. Pakistan not only got back its prisoners-of-war but also its lost territory. India lost the golden opportunity to solve the Kashmir dispute. Some people however, claim that Mrs. Gandhi had made Bhutto to agree to conversion of the Line of Control in J & K into a permanent border. They further asserted that it was a verbal assurance as Bhutto had said that its inclusion in the Shimla Agreement would create problems for him in his country to convince his people. He is reported to have pleaded for time, which we are told, was generously granted. Smug with return of the prisoners-of-war and return of his territory Bhutto cleverly dithered on his reported verbal promise. The result was that he was removed by an Army coup and Kashmir continued not only to simmer but acquired more sinister shape under the rule of General Zia-ul-Haq. Within three years of the creation of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman and his entire family were brutally murdered in Dacca by a group of Army officers who were under the influence of fundamentalists. Though with a limited Army which could not be much of a threat to India, Bangladesh has slowly emerged as an Islamic State. Pro-Pakistani and naturally anti-Indian

elements are becoming more and more assertive. It seems that not in a very distant future we may be faced with two Pakistans instead of one at present. Could one call it a success of our foreign policy?

(4) In January 1998, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee takes a bus-ride to Lahore. While he is there signing the famous Lahore Agreement, the Pakistan Army is planning an armed attack in the Kargil sector aimed at cutting off the Leh area and launching a further thrust into the Valley where they have already unleashed a terrorist onslaught. This was soon followed by the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane from Kathmandu to Kandahar. All that India did was to meekly release three dreaded Pakistani terrorists in Indian jail in exchange for the safety of the airline passengers. Although the nation effectively dealt with the Kargil conflict by facing Pakistan Army to withdraw, yet it had not shown any semblance of a solid Pakistan policy.

The fact that Pakistan has. mostly, been able to get away with whatever it wanted *vis-a-vis* India, is the most annoying aspect of our foreign policy. Pakistan has set up a regular organisation called 1SI to plan and execute acts of subversion and sabotage in India on a large scale. It has already unleashed hundreds of well-trained and well-equipped terrorists into the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Exporting of *'Jehad'* has become an important part of Pakistani foreign-policy. Pakistan has been able to spread propaganda amongst India's neighbours that India is a 'soft' state and that unless it is kept busy with its internal strife it would one day, gobble all of them. It is natural that small nations entertain some suspicions about their big neighbours. Pandering to these suspicions Pakistan seems to have succeeded in concretising these fairs and obtained tacit agreement from these countries to use their territories for setting up training centres, subversion and sabotage centres, explosive dumps and transit camps for forays into India. We know Bangladesh, Nepal and even Bhutan territories arc being used for all these purposes including as hide-outs. Myanmar is believed to be providing facilities for training to the terrorists in north-east. That Chinese and Pakistani interests arc complimenting each other in these areas is of further concern. The fact, however, remains that Pakistan is playing a pivotal role in encouraging anti-Indian feelings in the region. And

how arc we dealing with it? Because of lack of a cogent Pakistan policy our South Block mandarins deal with Pakistan in an *ad hoc* manner almost on the basis of a day-to-day reaction. Unless we have a well-defined policy, we will be mostly on the defensive. Somehow, the Muslim majority character of the Jammu and Kashmir State, absence of any effective communication with our Muslim compatriots and continued intransigence of Pakistan has inhibited our policy. There is need to send a definite message that India cannot be taken for granted and that any harm to its national interests would be effectively countered. India also need to assert that its peace-loving professions should not be construed as its weakness. Neighbours, especially should be clearly told that their freedom and well-being are dependent on a strong and prosperous India. The neighbours, it is hoped, will realise that India a leviathan in slumber, is slowly but surely waking up. India is destined to be a super power and no gimmicks and pin-pricks can stop it.